No. 279 / MAY 1996

THE NI

NEW INTERNATI

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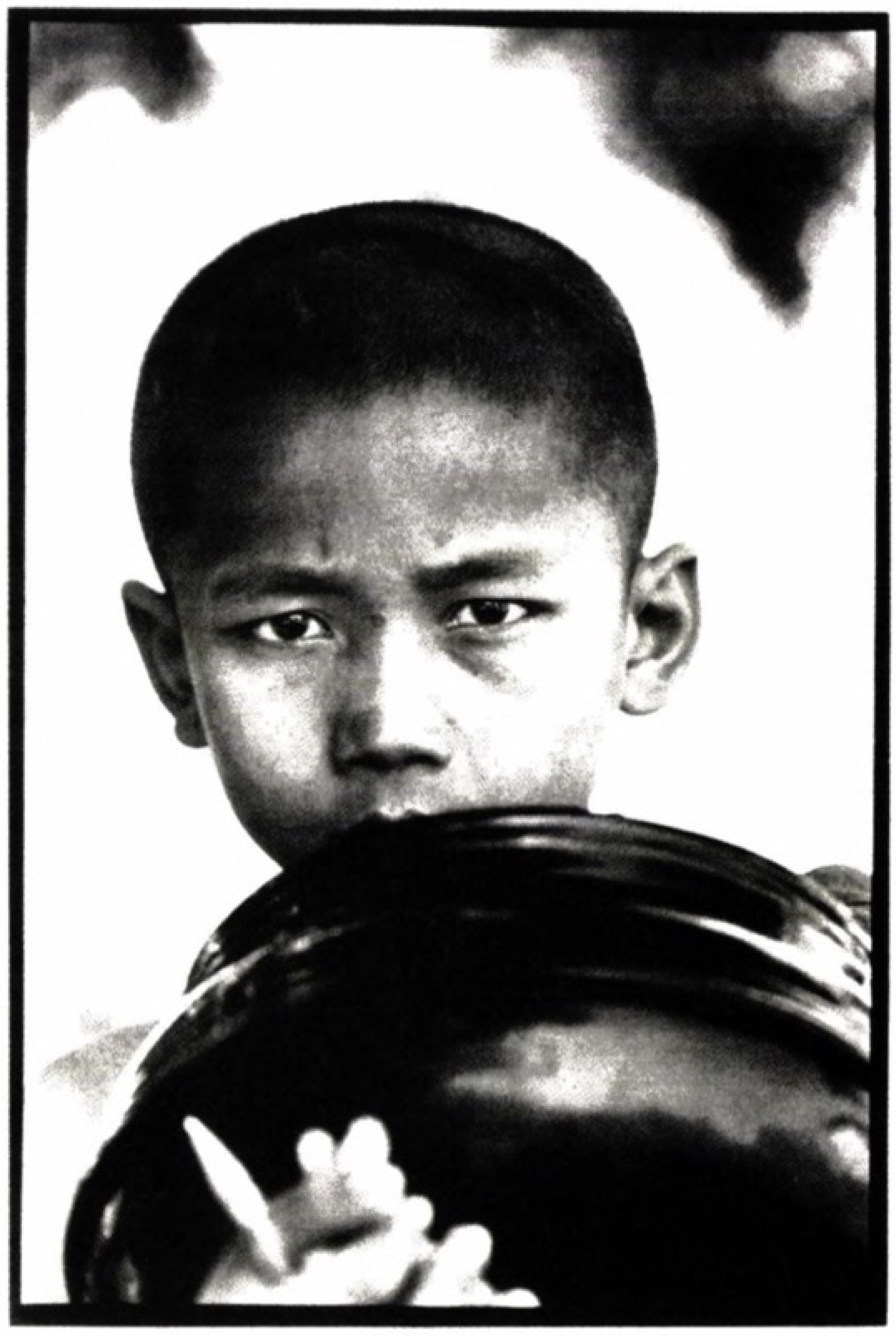
COMING NEXT MONTH

Burma


FBN

Last year, Nobel Prize-winner and Burma's elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi was released after six years detention in her own home. Did this mean that the country's notorious military regime was planning to loosen its iron grip on the country?

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- **Smack pact** – Most of the world's opium for heroin comes from Burma. But the country's most notorious drug warlord has now made a deal with the Junta…
- **Fuelling cruelty** – Multinational oil companies are eager to do business in Burma. What can we do to stop them?
- **Aung San Suu Kyi** – Special interview by John Pilger.

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(see back cover special offer)

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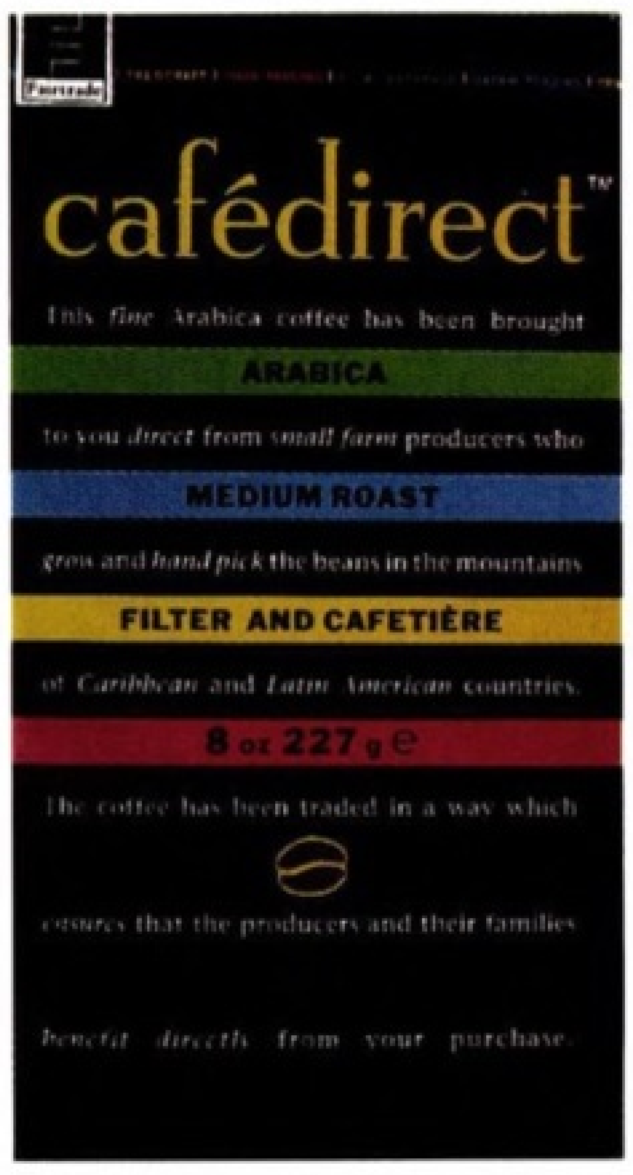
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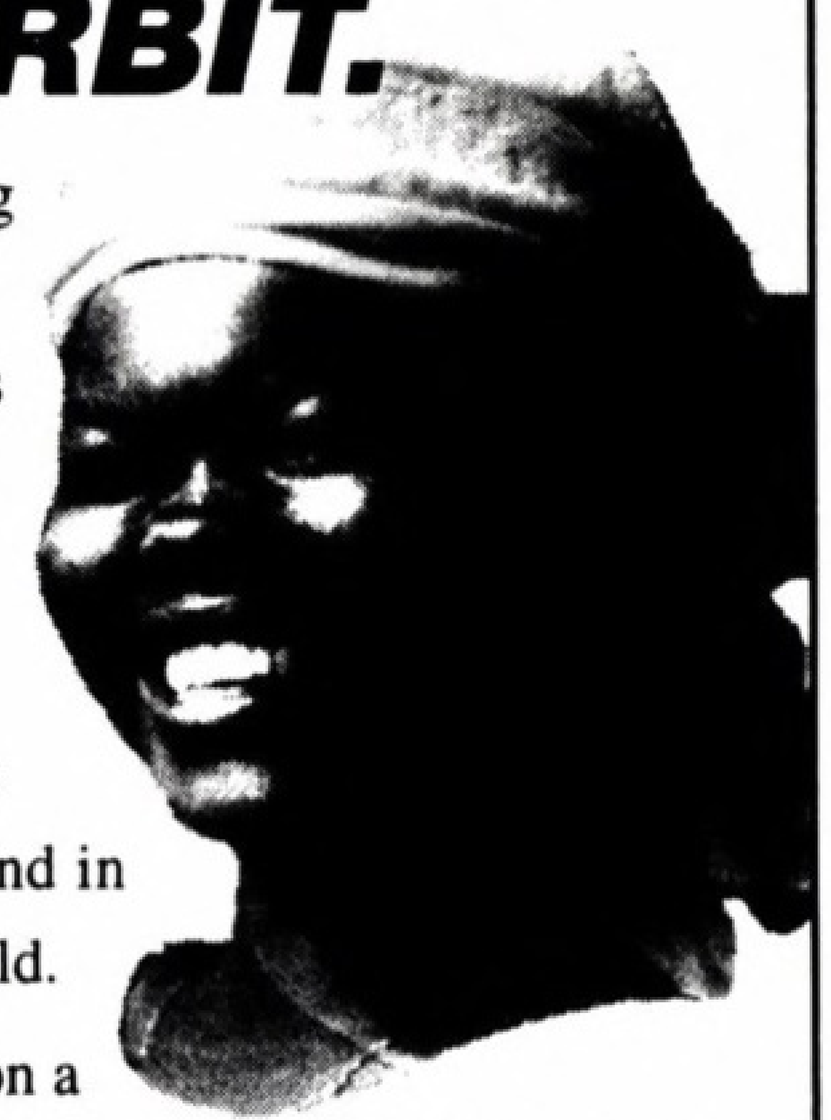

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THE FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH SHOWS PRO-DEMOCRACY DEMONSTRATORS IN TIANANMEN SQUARE, BEIJING, JUST BEFORE THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT SENT IN THE TANKS IN MAY 1989. LIKE THE PICTURE ON PAGE 7 IT FORMS PART OF A CLASSIC SERIES OF PHOTOGRAPHS BY **STUART FRANKLIN** OF **MAGNUM**.
MAGAZINE DESIGNED BY **IAN NIXON**

THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

Resistance

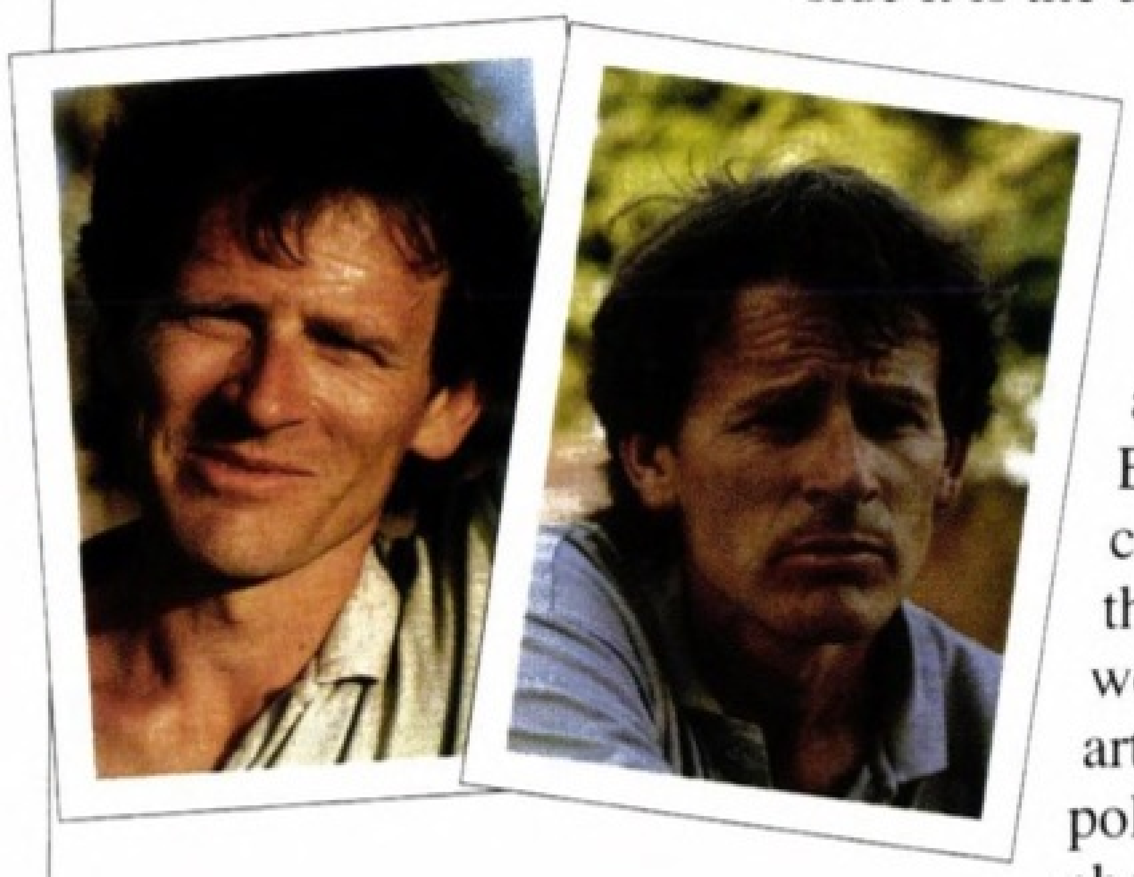
FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

There's been controversy on the editors' floor of this office ever since I published a photo of myself in this space in my issue last year on an *African Village*. I'd arranged for the village and its people to be captured by the camera of our old friend Claude Sauvageot and he naturally took a few pictures of me at work along the way.

You will perhaps forgive me for having chosen the one which showed me in the most flattering light. My co-workers, however, were unmerciful. 'The first off-the-shoulder soft porn in the **NI**,' said one. 'He thinks he's bloody Harrison Ford,' said another. More woundingly still: 'Who is this?', implying that the care-ravaged, slouching apology for a man she saw crawling into his desk every day bore no relation whatsoever to this artificial creation of a world-class portrait photographer. The troupe of Hollywood beauticians I took with me to Africa just to make this photo possible were of course excluded from the frame.

Since this is a photographic issue dedicated to documentary truth I thought the record should be set straight. Here I reproduce again the offending photo, purely in the interests of showing you the hideousness of my crime. And alongside it is the unvarnished truth: a hitherto censored photo of the journalist at work in that village in Burkina Faso. An unsavoury character: sweaty, unshaven and with the most deeply furrowed brow in human history.

The camera does not lie, they say. But we always edit and censor the truth it provides. Even the greatest photographers are continually discarding hundreds of pictures that do not show their subjects quite as they would wish – or that do not meet their own artistic standards. For even in the highly political areas explored by this magazine photography is an art. A visual magazine on resistance around the world could very easily have turned into a parade of rather tedious documentary photos showing demonstrators waving placards. Instead the protesters and their stories have been brought to life by the eye and appreciation of an artist for a different angle, a quality of light, a special expression.



This is the first photographic issue we have produced since we started printing the magazine in full colour, a decision we originally took partly because we felt monochrome images, for all their power, were giving no sense of the cultural vibrancy and sheer bright colours of the South. Ironically one of the main spin-offs of full-colour printing is that it makes high-quality reproduction of black-and-white photographs much more possible – and, paradoxically, black-and-whites can still often seem more 'realistic', somehow more appropriate to social documentary. It is noticeable that all the Southern photographers who have contributed to this issue have chosen to work in black and white.

This is also probably one of the most positive magazines we have ever produced. We are always keen to publish stories which show people standing up for themselves, organizing against the forces which bear down on them. But this issue has been a glorious excuse to focus on nothing but those examples of active resistance. Gathering these pictures, hearing these stories, I have felt my own spirits rise – the world may be in trouble but, hey, the fight-back has begun.

Chris Brazier

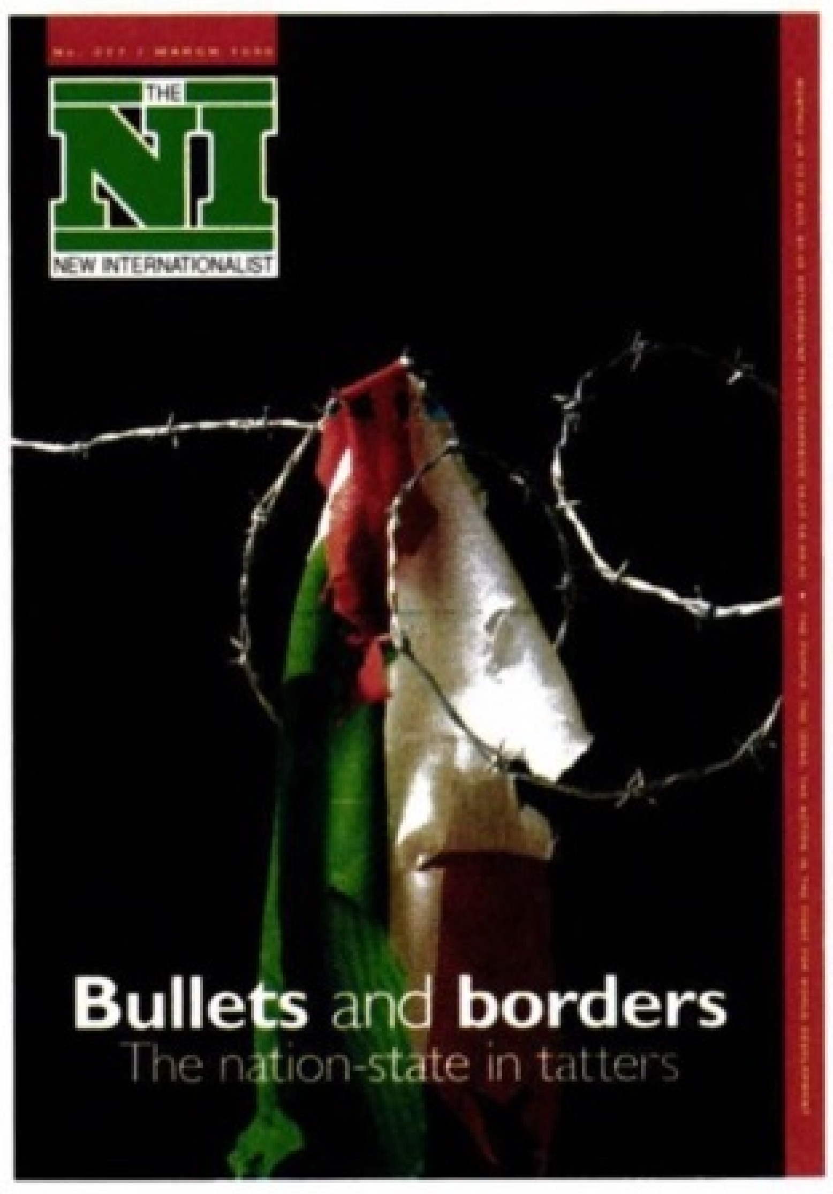
Chris Brazier
for the ***New Internationalist*** *Co-operative*

Letters

The New Internationalist welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address and e-mail is inside the front cover.

Being human

I would like to quote a few lines from Edward Said's *Imperialism and Culture,* with reference to your issue on nationalism (**NI 277**). 'No-one today is purely one thing. Labels like "Indian" or "woman" or "Muslim" or "American" are now no more than the starting-point, which, if followed into actual experience for only a moment, are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively white, or black or Western or Oriental. Yet just as human beings make their own history, they also make their cultural and ethnic identities.'



Nationalism creates the idea and the feelings of separateness. Perhaps it is a word that should be excluded from usage. We are all Human Beings. Our uniqueness is enriched by our vast diversities of culture. These must incorporate rather than exclude, be of interest rather than a source of fear and offer friendship rather than hostility.

Naomi Griffiths
Kendal, England

Toothless

Kevin Coffey (*Letters* **NI 276**) is under the impression that a global ballot would be democratic, even feasible. In Britain, the turnout at a general election and the percentage of the vote gained by the elected party means that in actual fact the Government does not have a majority of the vote.

The UN is deliberately toothless, while arms industries in NATO countries sell weapons to both sides in conflicts around the world, creating a global balance of terror. When these blow up, people start to demand that 'something must be done!' and NATO countries, as the only ones with effective armed forces, can then 'volunteer' to police the war zones – on condition that they have control of the UN Security Council.

Michael Spencer
Halifax, England

Milked

I share your concern about Nestlé (**NI 275**). I also believe they are exploiting the poverty of small-scale dairy producers in many Asian countries.

In Sri Lanka, the Government encouraged local production of milk. The prices paid to the small farmer were subsidized from savings made through the purchase of cheap milk powder. Now, however, the small farmer has to compete directly with the artificially low prices of milk powder dumped on the world market. Prices are determined and totally controlled by Nestlé.

It would seem that the dividend to shareholders is the only concern of this company, even if it has to be achieved by exploiting ignorance and poverty in developing countries.

Dr ER Orskov
Aberdeen, Scotland

Çiller's story

While no-one can deny that gross human-rights abuses are occurring in the south-east of Turkey at the hands of Turkish security forces, it is rather flamboyant to place the blame on the shoulders of Tansu Çiller (*In the Dock* **NI 275**).

Like many Westerners you have glossed over the difference between the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), a ruthless, bloodthirsty terrorist group, and the Kurdish people. Çiller's systematic campaign is against the PKK not the Kurdish people. She was among the first senior Turkish politicians to acknowledge the injustices to which the citizens of the south-east were subjected, and, along with the State Minister for Human Rights, Algan Hacaloglu, appears to be making genuine efforts to find a suitable solution for the whole Kurdish question.

And what of the PKK's murdering of civilians, 'imperialist' Turkish school teachers and unarmed soldiers? Or are these legitimate activities for 'freedom fighters'?

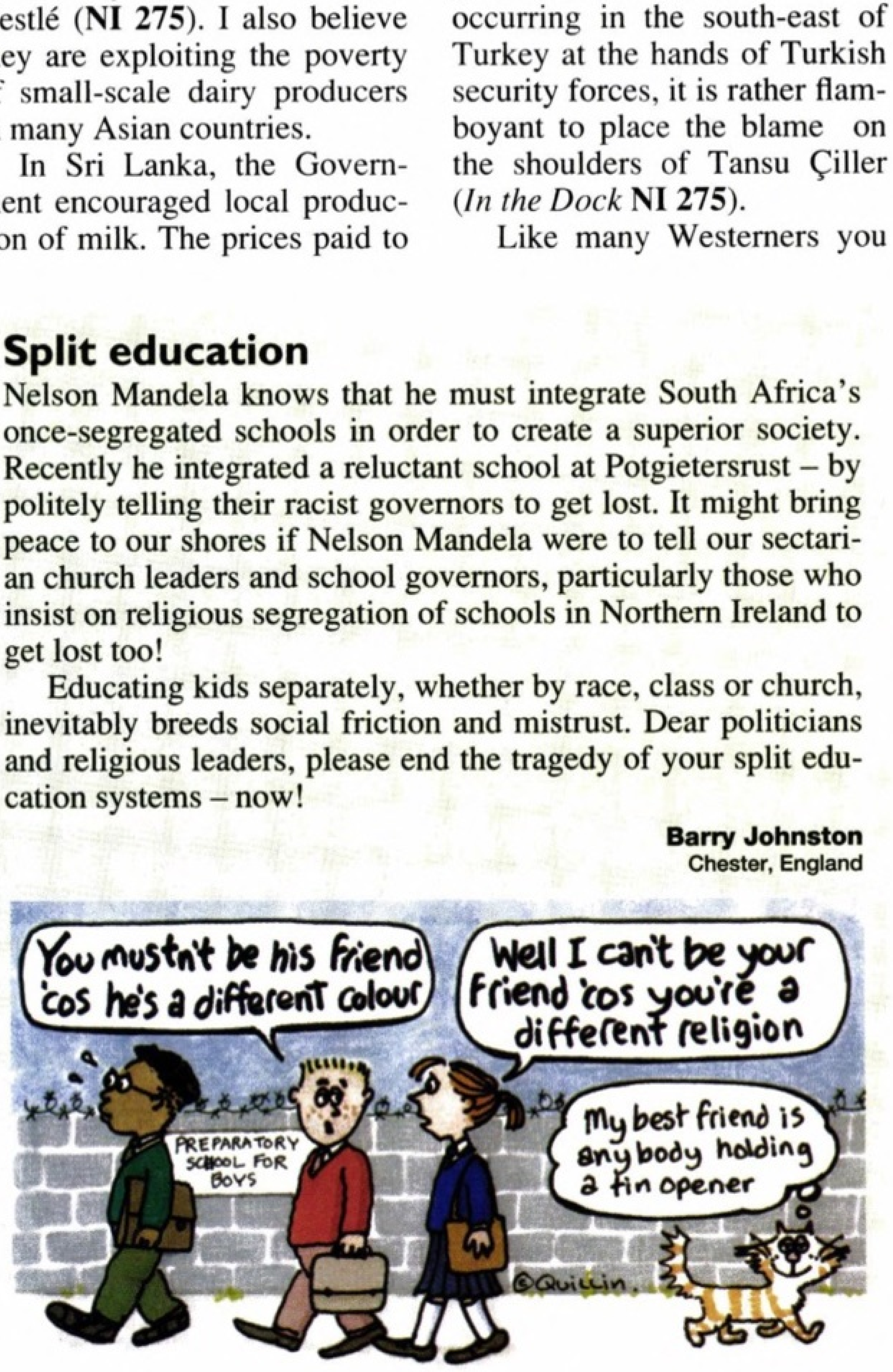
William Gourlay
Melbourne, Australia

Split education

Nelson Mandela knows that he must integrate South Africa's once-segregated schools in order to create a superior society. Recently he integrated a reluctant school at Potgietersrust – by politely telling their racist governors to get lost. It might bring peace to our shores if Nelson Mandela were to tell our sectarian church leaders and school governors, particularly those who insist on religious segregation of schools in Northern Ireland to get lost too!

Educating kids separately, whether by race, class or church, inevitably breeds social friction and mistrust. Dear politicians and religious leaders, please end the tragedy of your split education systems – now!

Barry Johnston
Chester, England


You mustn't be his friend 'cos he's a different colour
Well I can't be your friend 'cos you're a different religion
My best friend is anybody holding a tin opener
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Tibet Society

I found much significant information in your issue on *Tibet* (**NI 274**), though I felt that there was a serious omission in not mentioning the Tibet Society, which was founded in 1959 and is the oldest of its kind in Britain. You also ignored the visit of the Dalai Lama to Britain in July last year, which was organized by the Society in conjunction with the Buddhist Society and the Network of Buddhist Organizations.

Andrew Sherratt
Uttoxeter, England

Ed: We are sorry that the Tibet Society of the UK did not get a mention. It can be contacted at: 114/115 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HL. Tel: (0) 171 363 7533; Fax: (0)171 383 7563.

Missing

In my reading of your magazine on *Tibet* (**NI 274**) two elements seem to be glaringly missing. You do not criticize the feudal and patriarchal structures of Tibetan Buddhism. Nor do you question women's position in Tibetan society. We know from history that women's participation in revolutionary movements doesn't add up to much as they get pushed aside afterwards. Most of the images offered by you of Tibetan women are those of mothers and nuns. Could there possibly be others who are raising their voices against the oppression from a religion which backs only a man's right to enlightenment?

Rani Drew
Budapest, Hungary

Trading places

I understand Sara Chamberlain's despair (*Endpiece* **NI 271**) at the commercialization of India's Hindu culture. However, this may be seen as a Western view of a 'Southern' culture as one which should remain unchanging.

A similar comment from an Indian journalist could read: 'It is a pity that young Westerners are no longer spiritually motivated. They don't go to church; they want to have sex before marriage, take drugs and choose their own partners. The Christian church has always given sound ethical and spiritual guidance to young people. Alas, they are turning away in droves and brazenly defying centuries of Christian traditions.'

Personally I feel liberated to have broken from the chains of traditional Christianity. Tradition can be oppressive even if it is picturesque. Surely young Indians have the choice to embrace change, just as we in the West have the choice to move away from a way of life championed by the older generations in our society?

Jennifer Herron
Sydney, Australia

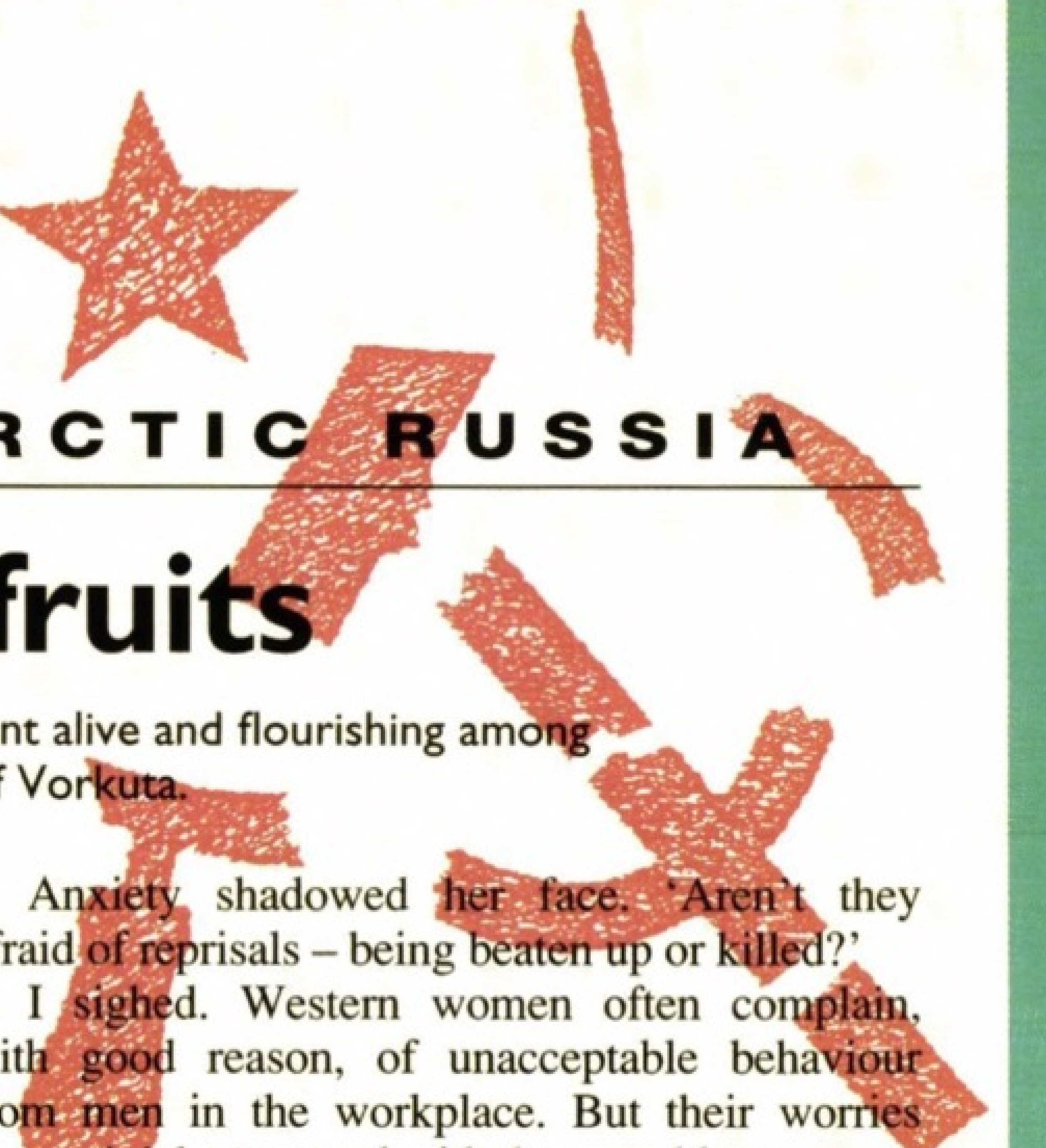
Invisible

I commend **NI** for helping to make the people of the South more visible and allowing their voices to be heard. But what about lesbians and gay men? Although you have touched on gay and lesbian themes, you have never, to my knowledge, devoted an entire issue to lesbians and gay men. Isn't it about time? Or will the gay men and lesbians of the South continue to be invisible and inaudible?

Jane Sanders
Woollahra, NSW, Australia

Ed: We did an edition on gays and lesbians in November 1989 (**NI 201**).

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the New Internationalist.



LETTER FROM **ARCTIC RUSSIA**

Bitter fruits

Olivia Ward finds sexual harassment alive and flourishing among the ice-blocks of Vorkuta.

NATASHA was celebrating, but modestly. No expensive bottles of *champanski*, just some cranberry juice distilled from the bitter-tasting fruit of the short polar summer.

'I just can't believe I have a job!' she said, pulling a heavy sweater over her lacy blouse as a gust of icy air blew into the restaurant. 'I almost gave up caring.'

Twenty-four years old and with the fair prettiness of a nineteenth-century icon, Natasha had come to Vorkuta to make her fortune. Since the 1960s, the Stalinist prison colony that dealt death to so many luckless souls had paid dividends to those willing to trade comfort for higher-than-average earnings.

'I had an offer to run an investment firm,' Natasha chuckled. 'At least that is what they called it.'

Just out of college in southern Russia, and with no job waiting for her, she launched her career as manager of a pyramid-selling scheme. Like many Russians at the dawn of the market economy, she was taken in by exciting promises that money could be spun out of thin air.

But as prices of shares rose, the schemes collapsed. Some of the company masterminds fled the country, others quickly started new firms.

Natasha was left with 11 months of winter and the small flat she had managed to buy in better times. After three years of independence, returning to her parents' cramped apartments would be a humiliating defeat.

'I thought a job would turn up any day,' she said. 'But it was never the kind of thing I wanted.'

On the rim of the Arctic Circle, Vorkuta is a town that runs on coal. The male-dominated industry sets the tone. As the mines declined so did all the town's jobs.

However, Natasha learned, there was always opportunity in one sector. 'On my first interview the boss said: "We don't want any women here – but you can change my mind." He made it clear what he meant.'

In the sophisticated cities of Moscow and St Petersburg, sexual harassment and discrimination are rife. But in the rough environs of Vorkuta, women are as much commodities as lumps of coal.

'Do men make insulting proposals to women when they look for jobs in the West?' she asked.

'If they do, the victims can take them to court,' I replied.

Anxiety shadowed her face. 'Aren't they afraid of reprisals – being beaten up or killed?'

I sighed. Western women often complain, with good reason, of unacceptable behaviour from men in the workplace. But their worries seem trivial compared with these problems.

Here, women desperate for jobs can expect constant harassment, even rape. Natasha had escaped those nightmares, but was still filled with resentment.

'I'd like to charge those men with destroying my self-confidence,' she said, stabbing her salted fish.

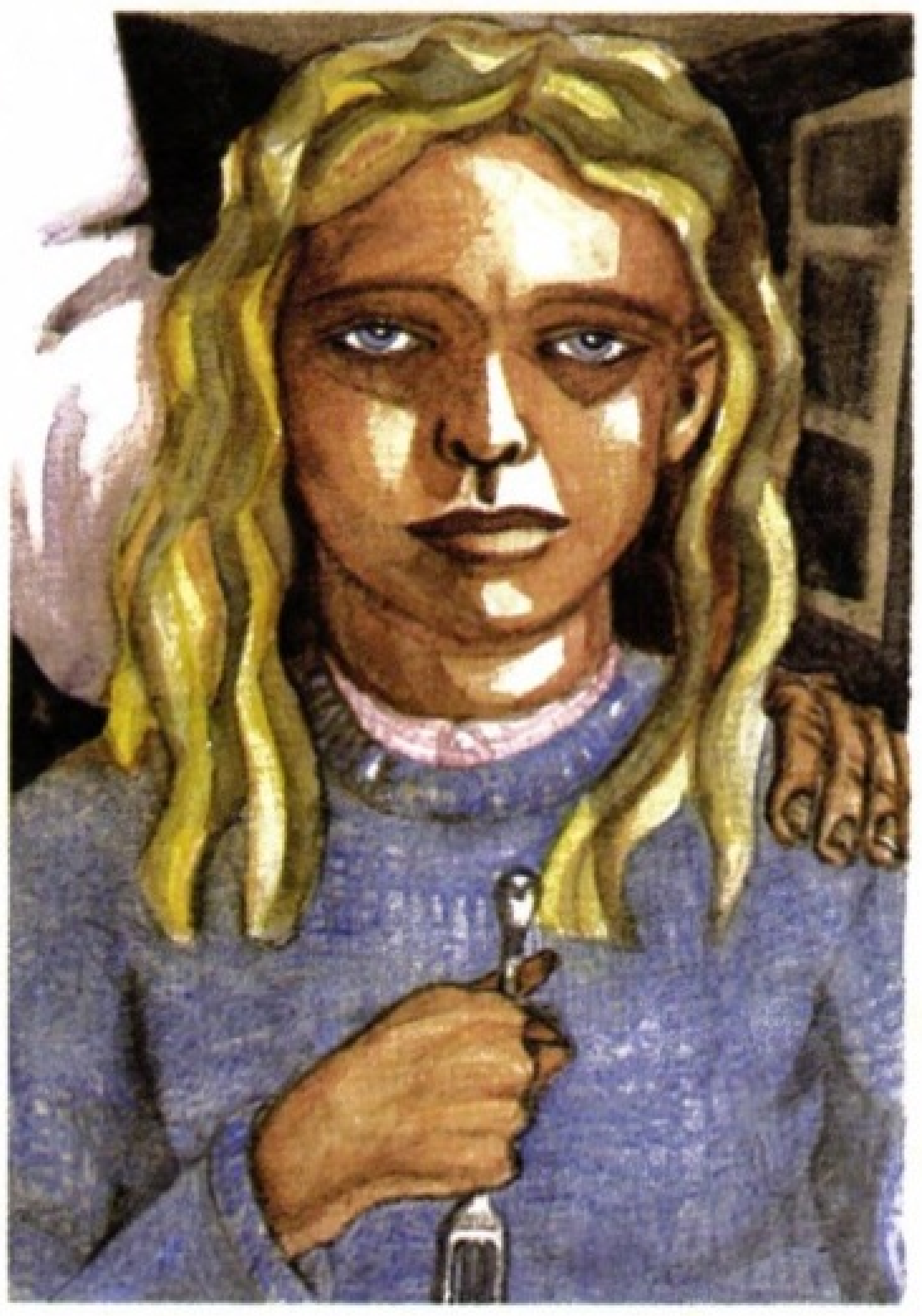
'I was afraid to get dressed in the morning. If I wore long baggy clothes and scraped my hair back and didn't wear lipstick, they'd look at me with contempt. If I made myself the slightest bit attractive they treated me like a prostitute.'

Do women in the West have these dilemmas?

'Not so much these days,' I said. 'They dress as they like and expect men to behave themselves.'

Natasha choked with laughter.

'In that case, we should send our men to the West for training. And not let them back into the country until they have passed a test.'



MIRIAM McCURDY

But, I reminded her, there must be *some* civilized northerners. After all, she finally found a job as a reporter on the local daily newspaper, a triumph for someone with no previous experience. Her first article had appeared that day, a smoothly written piece on unemployment.

'I was so lucky,' she said. 'I went to the newspaper and met the senior reporter. He read a story I wrote and told them to hire me right away.'

In fact, Natasha said, I would meet him shortly. He wanted to join us, a rare contact with a foreign journalist.

Almost as she spoke, Misha arrived. A tall energetic man in his thirties with badly-cut hair and a neatly-ironed shirt. A glass of wine and several cigarettes later, he glanced at Natasha, and his watch.

'You don't want to be late for work tomorrow.'

Natasha rose and he helped her on with her coat. His hand lingered on her shoulder caressingly, a gold wedding ring glinting on his finger.

It was time, I felt, to go south. ■

Olivia Ward is bureau chief for the *Toronto Star* in Moscow.

Update

VIETNAM

Dioxin damage

Scientists urge study of the effects of Agent Orange

Doctors in Hanoi believe these Vietnamese babies are victims of Agent Orange.

BRIAN EADS / CAMERA PRESS

DURING the war in Vietnam more than 18 million gallons of dioxin-laden Agent Orange and other herbicides were sprayed over ten per cent of South Vietnam between 1961 and 1971, poisoning and defoliating millions of hectares of forest and croplands. In neighbouring Laos about half-a-million gallons of herbicide were sprayed over 80,000 hectares.

Professors Pfeiffer and Westing were the first two scientists to study the effects of Agent Orange spraying in Vietnam. Along with other scientists they contributed to the public pressure which put an end to the spraying in 1970. They are now informing the US public of the unwillingness of the US to join with its allies in funding crucial dioxin research in Vietnam.

The indifference of the US is hardly surprising. As early as 1961 the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the US Air Force warned that: 'Care must be taken to assure that the US does not become the target for charges of employing chemical or biological warfare. International repercussions could be serious.'

According to Pfeiffer the sprayings of Agent Orange and crop-destruction programmes were aimed at depriving the peasants of their food supply and forcing them to move to areas dominated by the South Vietnamese. By sustaining this policy of 'generating refugees' the Pentagon hoped to deny the national-liberation forces the peasants' support, leaving them without a rural society in which to live.

In Hanoi the chief surgeon and director of the Viet Duc Hospital, Dr Ton That Tung, raised the alarm that contamination by the dioxin in Agent Orange was causing birth defects, liver cancer, chloracne and other health problems in southern Vietnam. He visited the US to gather support for a large-scale study of the population because: 'My country does not have the resources to do it alone.' He testified before a Congressional committee, but it made little difference. However, scientists worldwide in co-operation with their Vietnamese colleagues have been gathering evidence that gives the lie to the Agent Orange cover-up. At Tu Du Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City, doctors see a child born with a congenital defect about every day-and-a-half, down from one a day in the 1980s but still too high. A report in the American Journal of Public Health stated that dioxin levels in breastmilk in southern Vietnam were 50 times greater than in the unsprayed North.

Calls for research into the effects of dioxin contamination in Vietnam are backed by the knowledge that it will help to deal with the threat posed by widespread prevalence of dioxins in the environment in the US and elsewhere. Dioxins are the most potent carcinogen ever tested and are produced as a by-product of heating or burning chlorine-based chemicals. The primary sources today are the pulp and paper industry, municipal and hospital wastes, incinerators, herbicide and pesticide producers and agricultural users.

At present the US Government continues to shy away from funding research in Vietnam because it will mean admitting to chemical warfare.

From a longer report by Beatrice Eisman and Vivian Raineri published by the US/Vietnam Friendship Association, PO Box 460073, San Francisco, CA 94146-0073.

Decisions, decisions

Washington has been considering tougher sanctions against General Sani Abacha's repressive regime in Nigeria, such as freezing Nigerian military officers' and Government officials' assets in the US, banning the use of US technology in Nigeria's oil and gas sector, and a cultural boycott, including an Olympic ban. With the US dominant in gas-processing, a technology ban would scupper the Liquefied Natural Gas Project of Shell and Nigeria's state oil company. Meanwhile the larger question of oil sanctions would require multilateral effort through the United Nations and agreement there is unlikely.

Africa Confidential, Vol 37 No 4

Dirt fields

In land-starved Hong Kong, the authorities are eager to redevelop 4 of its 13 old rubbish landfills, at a cost of $219.8 million, into golf courses, a sports complex and a theatre. While the restoration of potential environmental hazards is to be lauded, one wonders why golf, a sport that is hugely wasteful of natural resources, has been chosen. The transformation will begin by capping the landfills and sealing the garbage, thus making it decay faster. But there are fears that the methane gas thus produced could slowly choke grass and trees.

Down to Earth, Vol 4 No 16

Clean sweep

The Russian Mountaineering Federation and the Mountaineering Association of Nepal have signed a memorandum to jointly clean up the garbage that has been piling up on and around Mount Everest. Oleg Fedorov, a Russian ecologist, believes that it is possible to return the mountain to its pristine glory with three years of dedicated effort. Presently 2.5 million rupees ($72,000) have been earmarked by the Nepalese Government for the clearing of the tons of garbage from the region.

Spoiling the view: tons of garbage on Mount Everest could be cleared up in three years.

BRUCE HERROD / CAMERA PRESS

Down to Earth, Vol 4 No 16

'Multicultural' Barbie

25,000 Barbie dolls are sold every business hour. After fuelling race controversies in the past the Barbie doll of the Nineties is paying (plastic) lip service to multiculturalism. Mattel, the toys' makers, are pitching Japanese, Mexican and Indian-style Barbies at 'the older girl learning more about history and different cultures at school'. Should these girls really be given a role-model who, apart from being slightly darker than Euro Barbie, is so thin she should, in reality, be dead?

STEWART MARK / CAMERA PRESS

Barbie business: it would take 18 years of production to string a line of them to the moon.

Everywoman, No 123

Problems for Pemex

The Mexican Government of President Zedillo plans to sell off large parts of Petroleos Mexicanos (Pemex), the state-owned oil monopoly, which was nationalized in 1938. Last year Finance Minister Ortiz told the US Treasury and IMF that proceeds from the Pemex sales, and sales of state-owned railroads, airports and deep-sea ports would be used to balance the Mexican budget and reduce debt. Now President Zedillo says that a substantial amount of this money will be used instead to fortify Pemex. Oil workers' unions, and opposition-party politicians and supporters do not think that any part of Pemex should be sold. In protest they have blockaded and shut down dozens of Pemex wells in Tabasco state, which has cost Pemex millions of dollars in revenue.

International Herald Tribune, Feb 14, 1996

NI wins award

New Internationalist **has won the New Media section of the One World International Media Awards for its World Wide Web site. The NI's homepage carries a sample of each month's magazine. The judges commented that the site 'has good, accessible layout and good content. It has great pictures and crisp images and the material downloads quickly. Although it is a translation of existing magazine content, it has been thoughtfully designed and is independent and committed.' Chris Brazier, who edits the site for the NI, comments: 'This is a medium which is in its infancy, and we are still exploring how to deal with it. So we're delighted that our first year's efforts have been so acclaimed.' Find it at: http://www.oneworld.org/ni/**

In addition, Vanessa Baird, Chris Brazier and David Ransom, NI co-editors, were among six journalists nominated for the 1995 Orwell Prize for political writing, which was won by Melanie Phillips of the London *Observer*.

CONSERVATION

Weighty dilemma

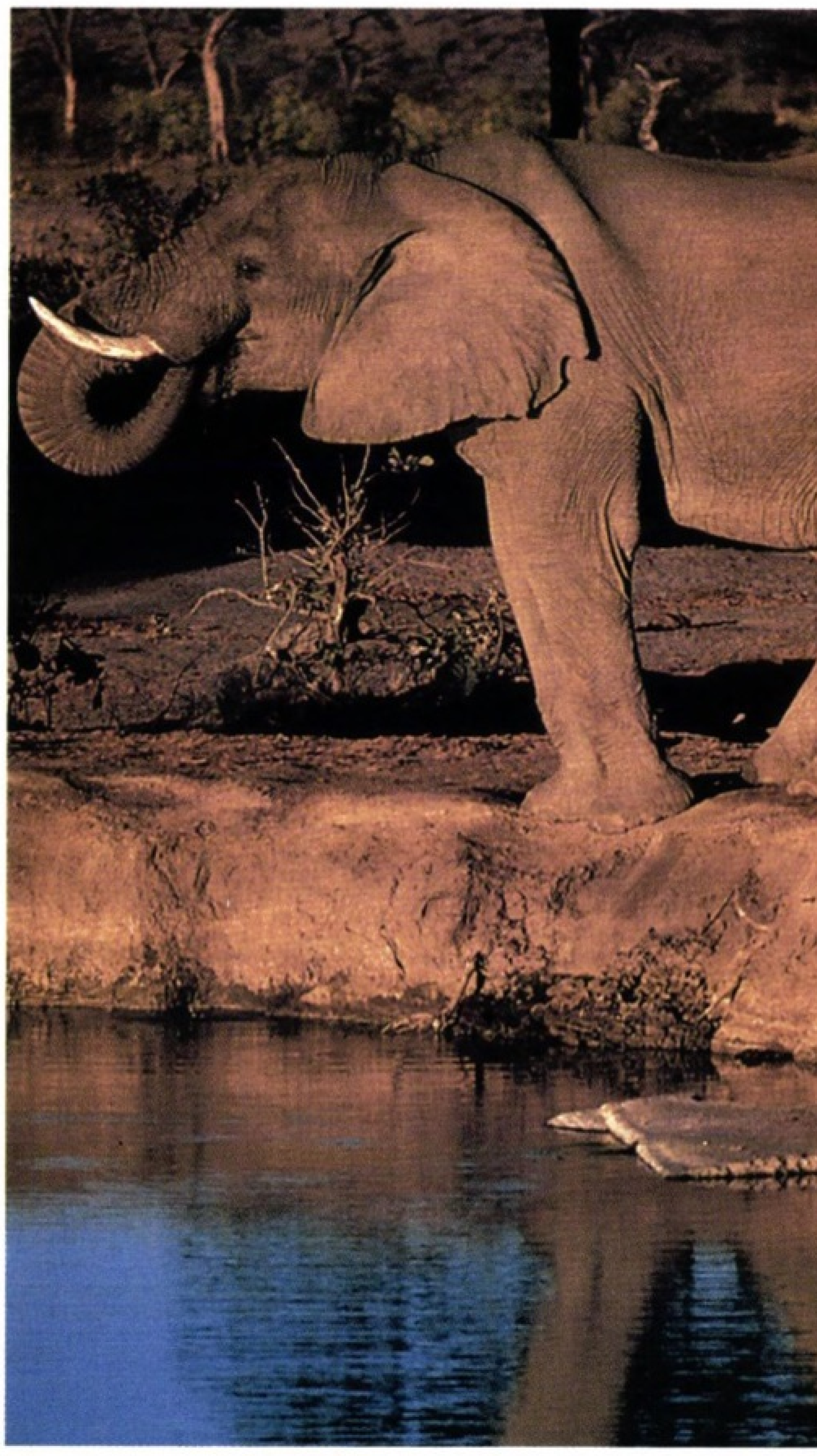
Elephants vs people in Cameroon

FARMER Orock Tabi was crushed by charging elephants while trying to save his cassava crop. He died in a desperate attempt to prevent marauding elephants from destroying his family's livelihood.

'You need to spend time here to share the plight of these farmers,' says Benjamin Ngo, wildlife protection officer at the local Akwaya post near Mamfe, southwest Cameroon. 'It's pathetic to see them weep after elephants have raided their crops.'

Ngo's records show that during the most recent farming season in Akwaya, about 200 elephants destroyed 300 hectares of crops on which 5,000 people were dependent. 'Farmers have invaded this office, threatening to kill us, saying we prefer animals to them,' says Ngo.

Competition for food and water, which is becoming more intense as human pressures on natural resources increase, is a principal cause of the conflict. A fully grown savannah elephant can consume about 140 kilograms of vegetation and 100 litres of water a day. There are currently 610,000 elephants in Africa, down from 1.5 million in 1979.



CAMERA PRESS

Elephantine problem: farmers say that animals are preferred to people.

In Cameroon a national elephant management plan is being drawn up with the assistance of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) to ease the conflict between the human and elephant populations. The plan proposes to create a network of parks and areas that will be protected from encroachment by farmers. Elephants will be provided with watering holes and prevented from wandering onto farmlands, thus separating the antagonists. Community participation in park management will be encouraged. Many of the benefits will go to local people in the form of employment, tourism, petty trade and bushmeat.

Cameroon's estimated 20,000-strong elephant population is protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which bans all commercial trade in elephant products. However, in a controversial move, both CITES and WWF endorse limited elephant hunting (80 per year in Cameroon) to control herd growth, provide meat for local people and revenue for the Government. Sports hunters must currently pay more than $2,000 for a licence to kill one elephant.

Despite the creation of parks and controlled hunting, the balance between conservation attempts and human interests remains a tricky one. Djoh a Ndiag, the Environment Ministry's Assistant Director of Wildlife, says: 'Human pressure on elephant-protection areas can come from tourists, migrants, developers and the growing populations inside and outside the national parks, many of whom resent restrictions on their access to traditional lands or sources of income.'

Nde Patrice Ateh / Gemini

Update

SYRIA

Coming home

Surprise amnesty for political prisoners

QUIETLY, without publicity or prior intimation, Syria began releasing large numbers of its political prisoners towards the end of last year. In November alone an estimated 2,400 were freed.

No-one knew how many people were held in Syria's notorious prisons. And since most of those taken away were neither tried nor sentenced, no-one knew when a person might be released or if, indeed, they were alive.

Significant numbers of the freed men and women are members of Ihwan al-Muslimeen, the Muslim Brotherhood Party that was an active opposition group until crushed in massacres at Hamah and Aleppo in the early 1980s. Apart from the killings, thousands were imprisoned and around 10,000 people fled into exile, according to one of the leaders of the group.

It is expected that more prisoners are going to be released, perhaps as many as 4,000, and the spiritual leader of the Brotherhood, Sheikh Abdul Fatah Abu Huda has returned to Syria after two decades of exile in Saudi Arabia.

The surprise move may not just be a gesture to the West but might reflect President Hafez al-Assad's desire to consolidate his position within his own country as Syria gets down to serious negotiations with Israel and the United States in the Middle East peace process.

Barbara Nimri Aziz / Gemini

ENVIRONMENT

Steel flowers

Protests at plans to destroy keora plantations in India

THOUSANDS of villagers in the 27 hamlets clustered around the eastern coastal port of Gopalpur, in India's Orissa state, have rallied behind the fragrant keora flower to oppose a factory being set up by the country's biggest private steel manufacturer.

The keora flower yields the essence which for centuries has been used by the indigenous perfume industry, and as an aromatic spice in traditional gourmet food. The steel plant of the Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) would devour nearly 3,000 hectares of the plantations, which produce 80 per cent of India's keora essence extract.

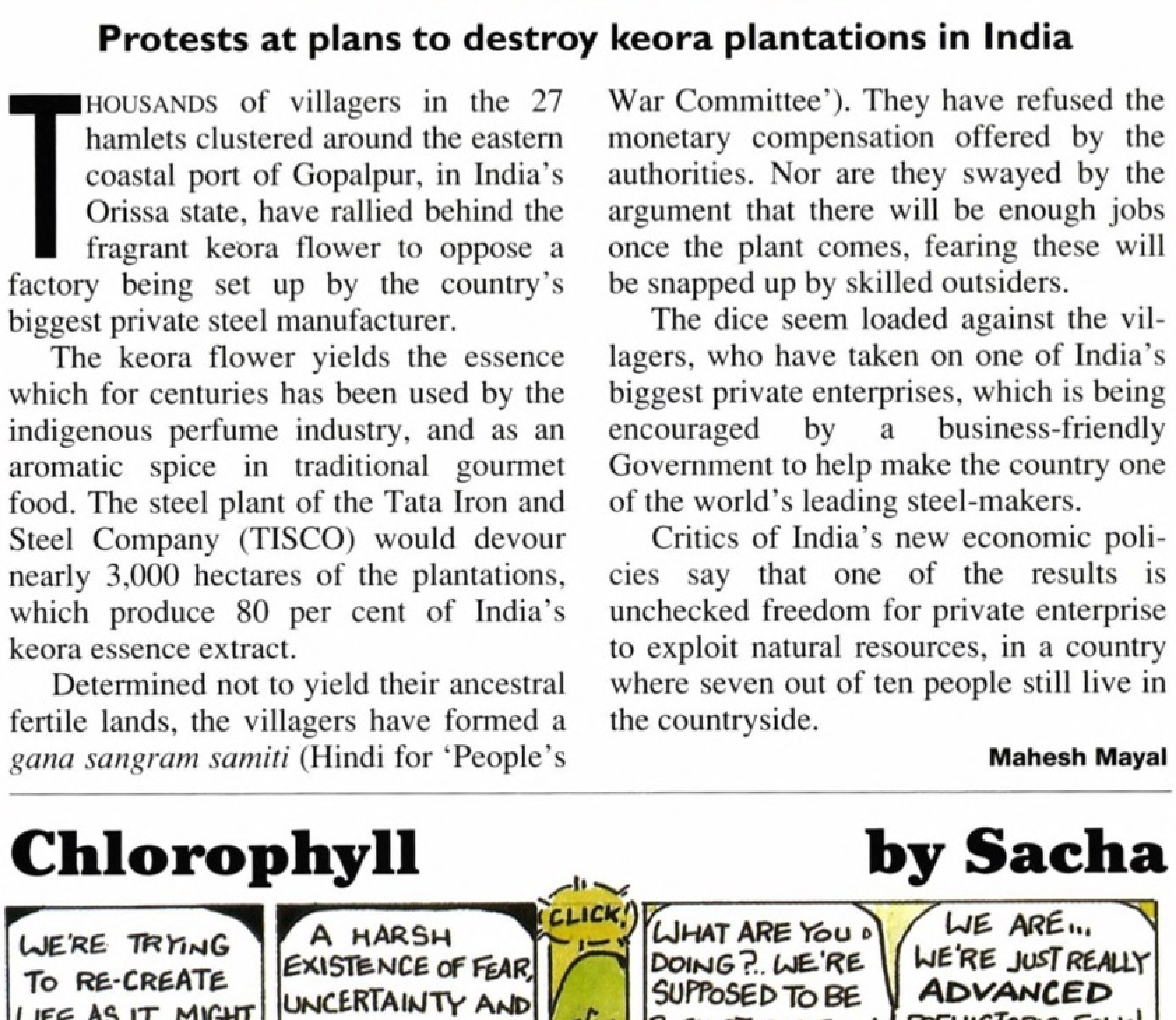
Determined not to yield their ancestral fertile lands, the villagers have formed a *gana sangram samiti* (Hindi for 'People's War Committee'). They have refused the monetary compensation offered by the authorities. Nor are they swayed by the argument that there will be enough jobs once the plant comes, fearing these will be snapped up by skilled outsiders.

The dice seem loaded against the villagers, who have taken on one of India's biggest private enterprises, which is being encouraged by a business-friendly Government to help make the country one of the world's leading steel-makers.

Critics of India's new economic policies say that one of the results is unchecked freedom for private enterprise to exploit natural resources, in a country where seven out of ten people still live in the countryside.

Mahesh Mayal

Chlorophyll by Sacha


WE'RE TRYING TO RE-CREATE LIFE AS IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN FOR PREHISTORIC FOLK..
SIGH..
A HARSH EXISTENCE OF FEAR, UNCERTAINTY AND DARKNESS!
DEEPER SIGH!..
CLICK!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?.. WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE PREHISTORIC FOLK!
WE ARE... WE'RE JUST REALLY ADVANCED PREHISTORIC FOLK!
Sacha

Rubber up

France's Roman Catholic bishops have given approval to the condom as a means of preventing the transmission of the HIV virus, thus putting themselves at odds with the Vatican and the Pope, who remains firmly opposed to the use of condoms. Albert Rouet, Bishop of Poitiers, went on the radio saying: 'When an adult, as mature as one can be in this domain, considers he [sic] can't do without sexual relations, and there is a danger, it's better that he use a condom.' The bishops in their statement strongly defended fidelity in relationships and stressed the issue involved far more than 'a piece of latex'. They also warned that young people needed education about their sexual identities so that they would not become 'prisoners of their sexual drives'.

RAJNEESH MEDICAL CORPORATION
AIDS will kill two thirds of the world's population.

CAMERA PRESS

Ecumenical News International

The quality of (British) mercy

Refugee organizations in Britain are concerned that many people being refused asylum have genuine cases. Take for example this notice for refusal: 'Soldiers from the (Zairian) Division Special Presidentielle came to your house, arrested your father and shot your brother who later died, though you managed to escape through a window. The Secretary of State noted your claim that the soldiers were firing wildly within the house, and he considered that the killing of your brother therefore was not necessarily a deliberate act. He further noted that they did not shoot your father who was the most politically active member of your family.'

Exile, newsletter of the Refugee Council No. 90.

Quote

'It helps that the guy is dead.'

Felipe Miranda, of the Social Weather Stations survey group in Manila, on the results of a survey suggesting Filipinos do not hate former dictator Ferdinand Marcos as much as they did ten years ago.

Join the Resistance!

Chris Brazier

draws inspiration from the new wave of direct action worldwide.

BRITAIN'S Conservative Deputy Prime Minister is at the bedroom window of his multi-million-dollar mansion amid 250 hectares of beautiful parkland. He is wearing lavender pyjamas and his jaw has just hit the floor. What has confronted his eyes early this Sunday morning is a brave example of the enterprise culture he has done so much to promote. A group of miners, trade unionists and environmental activists has banded together to form a consortium ready to explore the possibilities of opencast mining for coal in Michael Heseltine's back garden.

Only British readers are likely to enjoy the full irony of this moment – Heseltine gave the final kiss of death to the country's coal-mining industry in 1993, closing 31 modern deep pits on the grounds that there was no market for their coal. He is now second-in-command of a government which is encouraging companies to tear up the fields and woods around many of the same pit villages in pursuit of meagre coal seams not far beneath the surface. Now some of those villagers, part of a campaign called 'No Opencast', which links mining communities with green activists, are tearing up his turf.

The law, of course, is on Mr Heseltine's side. But these mining communities have had more than enough of waiting for the 'due process of law' and the 'mature consideration of the wider picture' to do them justice. They have lost their jobs, their traditional livelihood, lost the very heart of their community. They are not about now to stand by and watch the very fields

STUART FRANKLIN / MAGNUM

around them ripped up and scarred, to have the silica dust their menfolk once had to breathe underground blow into their houses, streets and schools on the wind.

'Pleading cases before the courts of the land,' said Martin Luther King, second only to Gandhi as the greatest advocate of non-violent direct action in our century, 'does not eliminate the necessity for bringing about the mass dramatization of injustice in front of a city hall. Indeed, direct action and legal action complement one another; when skilfully employed, each becomes more effective.'

Today a new wave of direct action is breaking on the shores of global political culture. Alienation from the official political process is an increasing problem worldwide, despite the apparent triumphs of 'democracy' over dictatorship in the last decade. If you are a landless peasant family in Guatemala you are no more likely under the current pretence at democracy to receive your just dessert of a parcel of earth to grow food on than you were 14 years ago under an unabashed dictatorship. Photographer Nigel Dickinson has just visited our office having returned from Central America with pictures and stories of land invasions by desperately poor communities that are identical in root cause and character to the land invasion in Honduras witnessed by an **NI** editor in 1981.

As this indicates, the techniques of direct action are by no means new. The anti-roads protester who 'locks on' to the tree or house about to be demolished by the car-culture juggernaut is using a modern technique developed in Australia then passed to campaigning groups all over the world. But the spirit and courage that leads people to lie down in front of tanks or chain themselves to railings has, thankfully, been evident in every part of the world in every decade of our century. The history of resistance on page 26 mentions just a few of these.

What has changed the gear and upped the ante is the global nature of our problems and, more specifically, the new and still-burgeoning awareness of how desperate is the plight of our environment. Once sneered at by Northern socialists as a 'soft' political issue lacking in 'class analysis', environmental politics is now at the cutting edge of resistance to the current world order everywhere. And its activists are making international and economic connections. Native American Daniel Zapata, who is fighting the open-cast mining of a British-based multinational Hanson on his people's land in Arizona, US, has just paid a visit to the campaign against open-cast mining in Selar, South Wales. Together they have forged links with the indigenous Igorot people in the Philippine Cordillera, who have for years been fighting the gold-hungry predations of another notorious corporation, Rio Tinto Zinc.

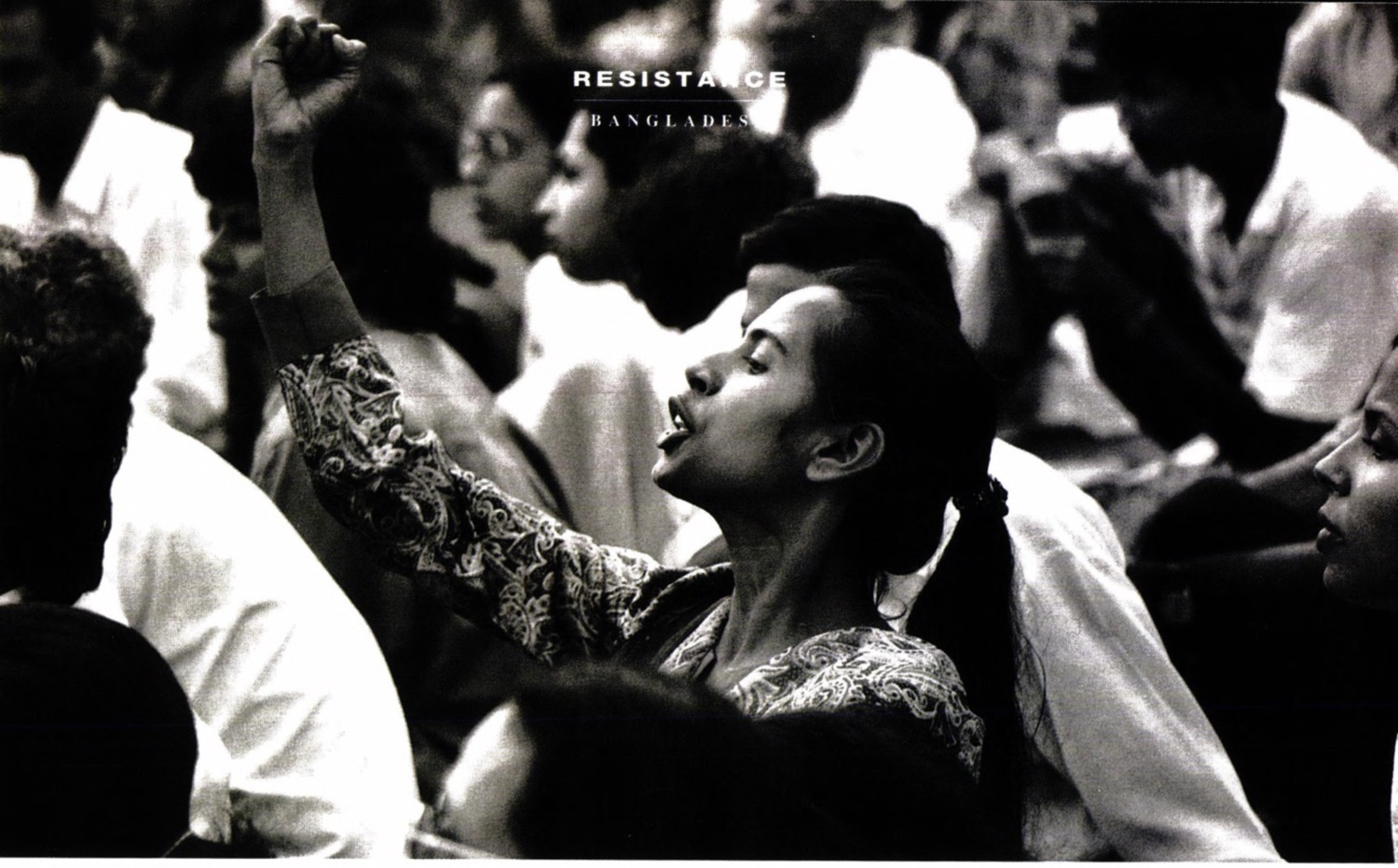
The latest generation of direct action in the North is often dismissed as 'single-issue' politics. It certainly cuts across traditional Left-Right affiliations. Yet that is more often a strength than a weakness, maximizing the chances of involving people from the middle ground who would usually avoid political protest like the plague. While in the South the greatest promise of a genuinely democratic future may lie in the current explosion of independent organizations which could herald a vibrant, healthy civil society. For example, one way to balance with a modicum of hope the terrifying story about political life in Bangladesh on the facing page is to look at the encouraging success of independent organizations such as the Grameen Bank and the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee in addressing some of the most pressing concerns of the poor.

But when push comes to shove political resistance will always involve individuals putting themselves at risk in the service of their ideals. This issue is an unashamed tribute not just to the work of high-quality photographers prepared to engage with the international issues that matter but also to the bravery and imagination of people all over the world who are prepared to put their bodies and minds in the way of the rampaging free-market bulldozer. The greater our awareness of each other's causes and campaigns, the more we will inspire each other, and the greater will be our collective chance of pulling a future worth having out of the fire.

'What do I live for?' asked the nineteenth-century poet George Linnaeus Banks, and then answered himself:

'For the cause that lacks assistance,
For the wrong that needs resistance,
For the future in the distance,
And the good that I can do.'

Time to take what is ours by right. A collective of Quechua people taking over idle land in Chimborazo, Ecuador, photographed by Julio Etchart/Reportage.



A state of danger

This is **Shahidul Alam**'s inside story, in words and pictures, of the intense struggle against repression which has been raging in Bangladesh, unnoticed by the Western media. Resistance work there is dangerous – photographers and journalists are regularly attacked and arrested.

THIS teargas was different. In 1990, people would bring buckets of water from their homes, we would wash our faces, and face the police again. This was some new formula. The only thing that worked was fire, and we held our faces close to a burning rag. We had been warned that the gas caused lung damage. We waited for the stinging to stop and got back to work.

There were other fears. This time we saw the police had submachine guns. We wondered who provided these guns and gases, and the smart armoured vehicles that sprayed hot water. We wondered how much they cost. I remembered an army officer proudly relating that they were UK-trained. Was that where they learned to apply electric shocks to the head, to dangle you from the ceiling by the ankles, and fracture your bones with mallets? Was that where they had been trained to scald faces with hot water and chilli?

It was a strange feeling to see the military patrols in the empty streets on election day, 15 February 1996. There were bunkers on the corners of all major roads. The machine guns followed you as you walked the streets. It was like 1971 again, when Pakistani soldiers roamed the streets, except that this time it was our army, propping up an autocratic regime by ensuring that this farcical election could go ahead.

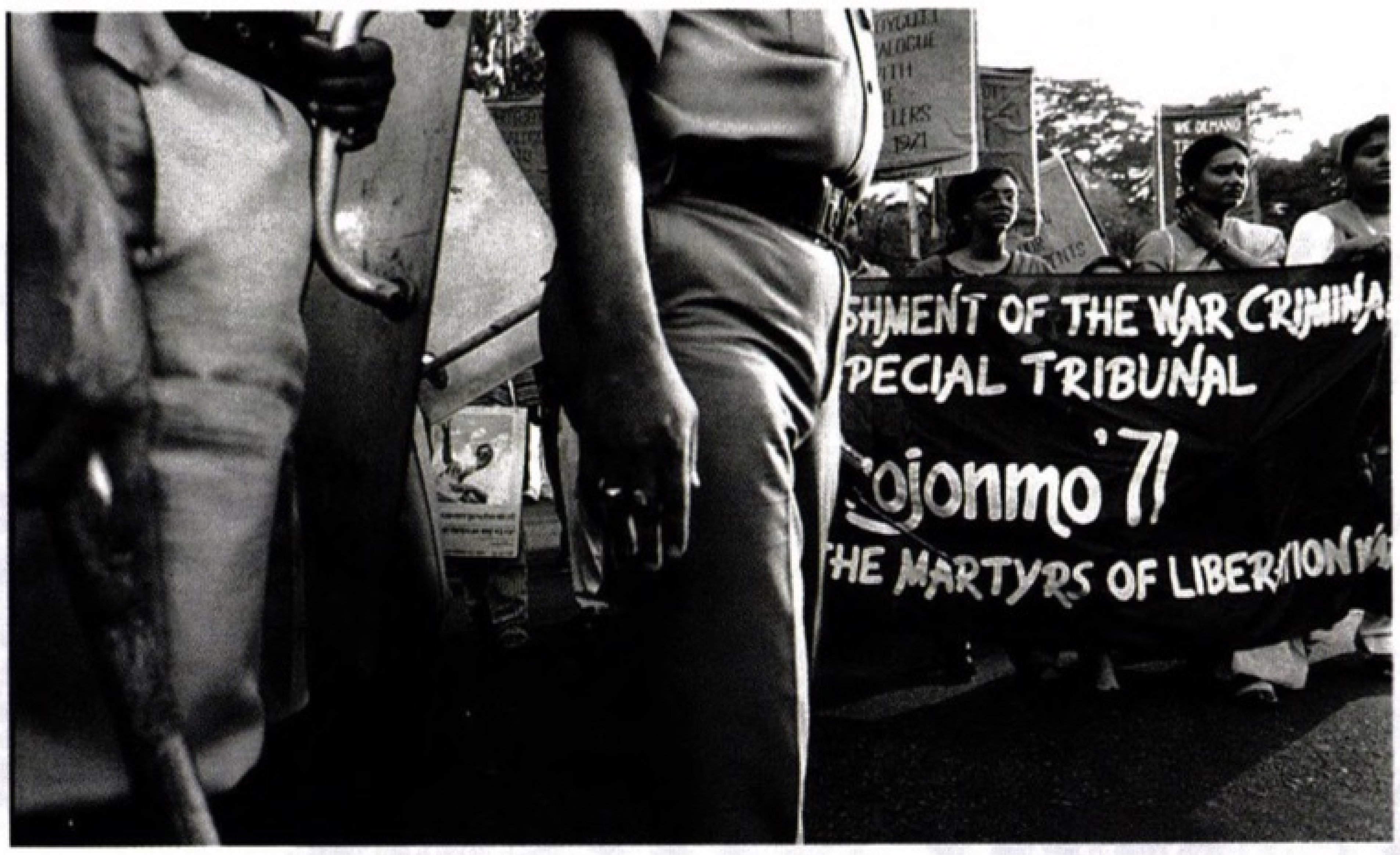
It had now been over a year since the opposition parties had resigned from parliament en masse in protest. We had been naive in thinking that a civilian government, elected by a genuinely fair vote in 1991, would be any different. I remembered the people dancing in the streets when the dictator Ershad was deposed in 1990. The general had held on to power for nine years, and it had been a long drawn-out battle. But the characteristics of the 'democratic' government led by Begum Khaleda Zia which succeeded him proved to be all too familiar. The draconian Special Powers Act was never repealed despite the election promises. Then there was the entente with the Jamaat-e-Islami fundamentalists, who had sided with the Pakistani Army in 1971.

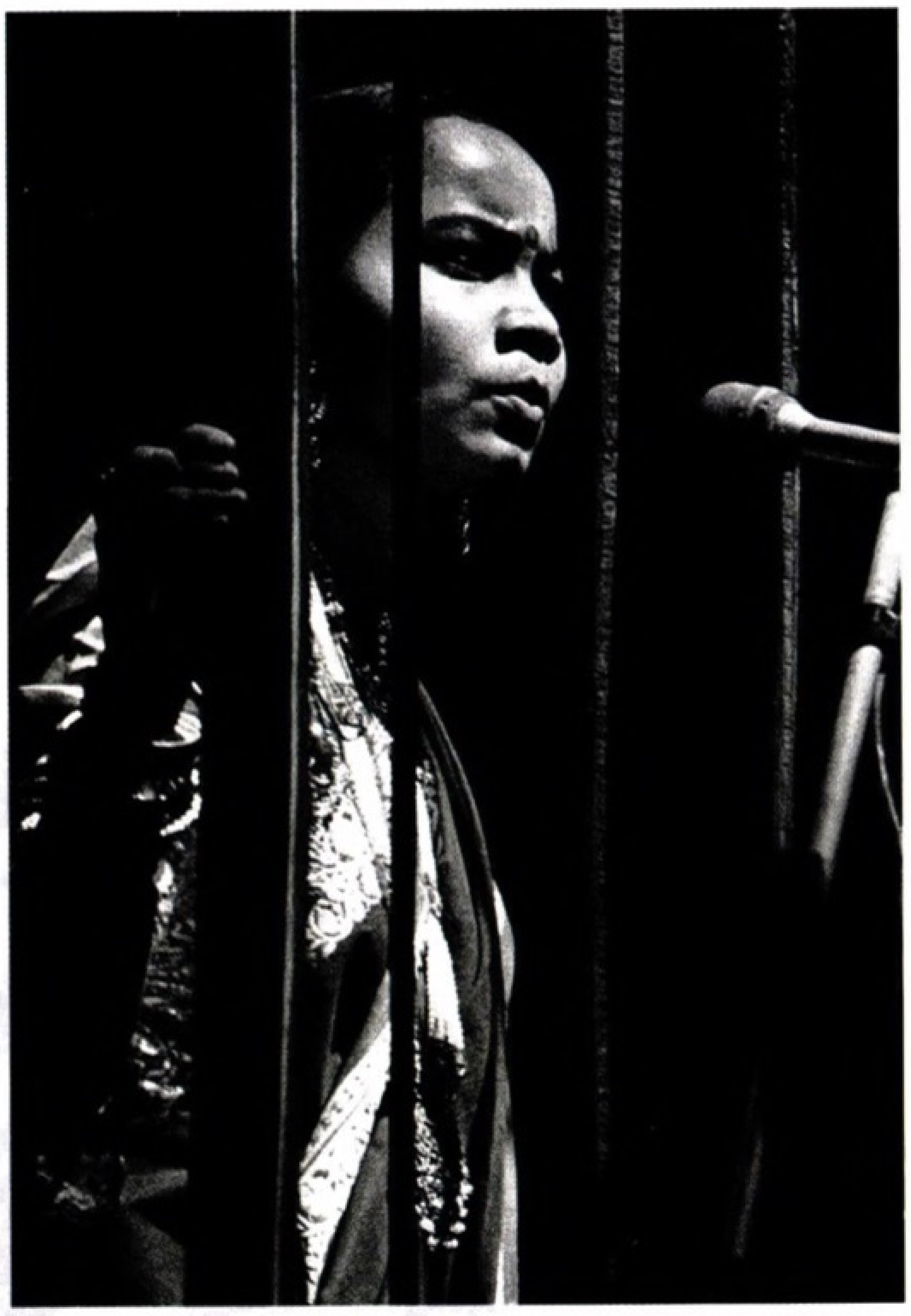
Enraged by the Government's rigging of by-elections, we realized that a caretaker government would be the only way to ensure a fair election. The resistance began anew. Farmers who protested the hoarding of fertilizers by government-sponsored dealers were shot. When police raped and strangled 14-year-old Yasmin there was a spontaneous siege of Dinajpur police station. It was time to take to the streets again.

On 31 January, a meeting called at the Teachers Students Centre to protest against military violence never took place. Police had raided nearby Jagannath Hall in Dhaka University and people were fleeing the campus. As we made our way through the teargas we came across hundreds of police who had taken over the hall of residence. Students, most dressed in *lungis*, were cowering in a corner, tied together and crouching on the ground. Teachers' protests were disregarded as 96 were herded into the small prison van. One student screamed out to friends for his identity card, in the faint hope that the official piece of paper might spare him. Those who had escaped arrest hurriedly took us to the students' rooms. We saw the blood on the floor, the broken doors, the ravaged rooms. A student who

In the beginning there was light. One of the climactic moments from Begum Khaleda Zia's victorious election campaign in 1991 *(above)*. Hope burgeons as Bangladesh launches into a rare free and fair election. The latest in a series of military-backed dictators, Hussain Mohammad Ershad, had finally been ousted two months before following an intensive three-year campaign for democracy.

But the optimism is short-lived. Demonstrators take to the streets when the Government allies with the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islam, whose leaders aided the Pakistani Army's genocide of Bangladeshis in 1971. Under the watchful eye of authority, children of that war's martyrs demand the trial of the war criminals *(below)*.



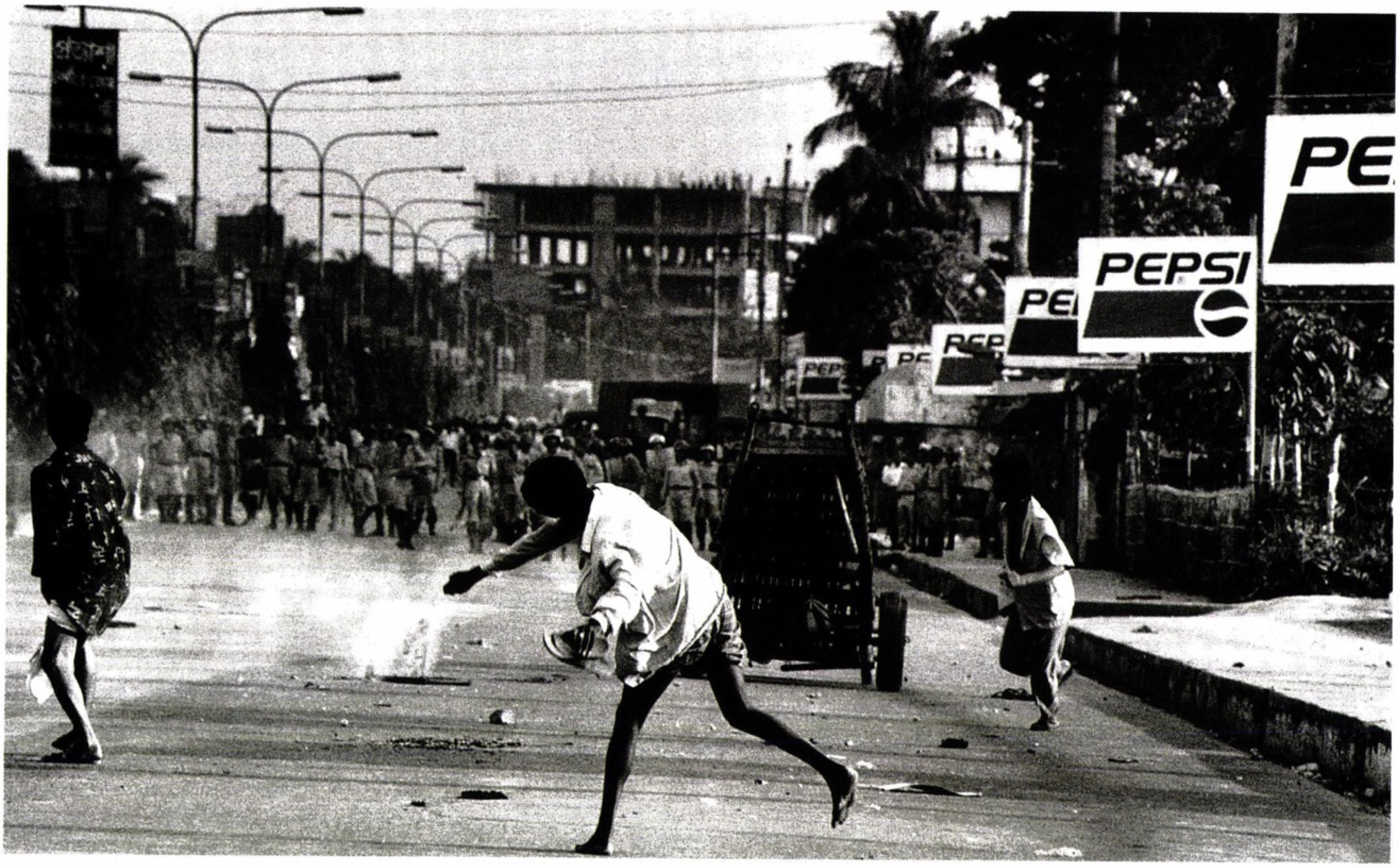


had been beaten but had escaped arrest, huddled on his broken bed and would not speak. Another cried over his broken guitar. Those arrested, without warrant and without evidence, have yet to be released.

For the 1991 elections, the polling station in Lalmatia Girls High School had been in a festive mood. Huge queues had built up outside. Women had turned up in large numbers, unwilling to miss out on their first chance to cast their vote without coercion. This time round there was a deathly silence. Army and police trucks were stationed outside the empty school. When they spotted my camera, polling officers hurriedly occupied their seats, but there were no voters to be found. The evening news reported a massive turnout and a landslide win for the BNP (Khaleda Zia's ruling party). Who was the news for? We all knew what was happening – surely Western diplomats could not be blind to what was going on?

Then the violence began to escalate. BNP hoods, supported by the police, took on both political activists and the general public. The total disregard for law and order made it hard to identify which attacks were political and which were not. We kept in close contact and re-tested our escape plans.

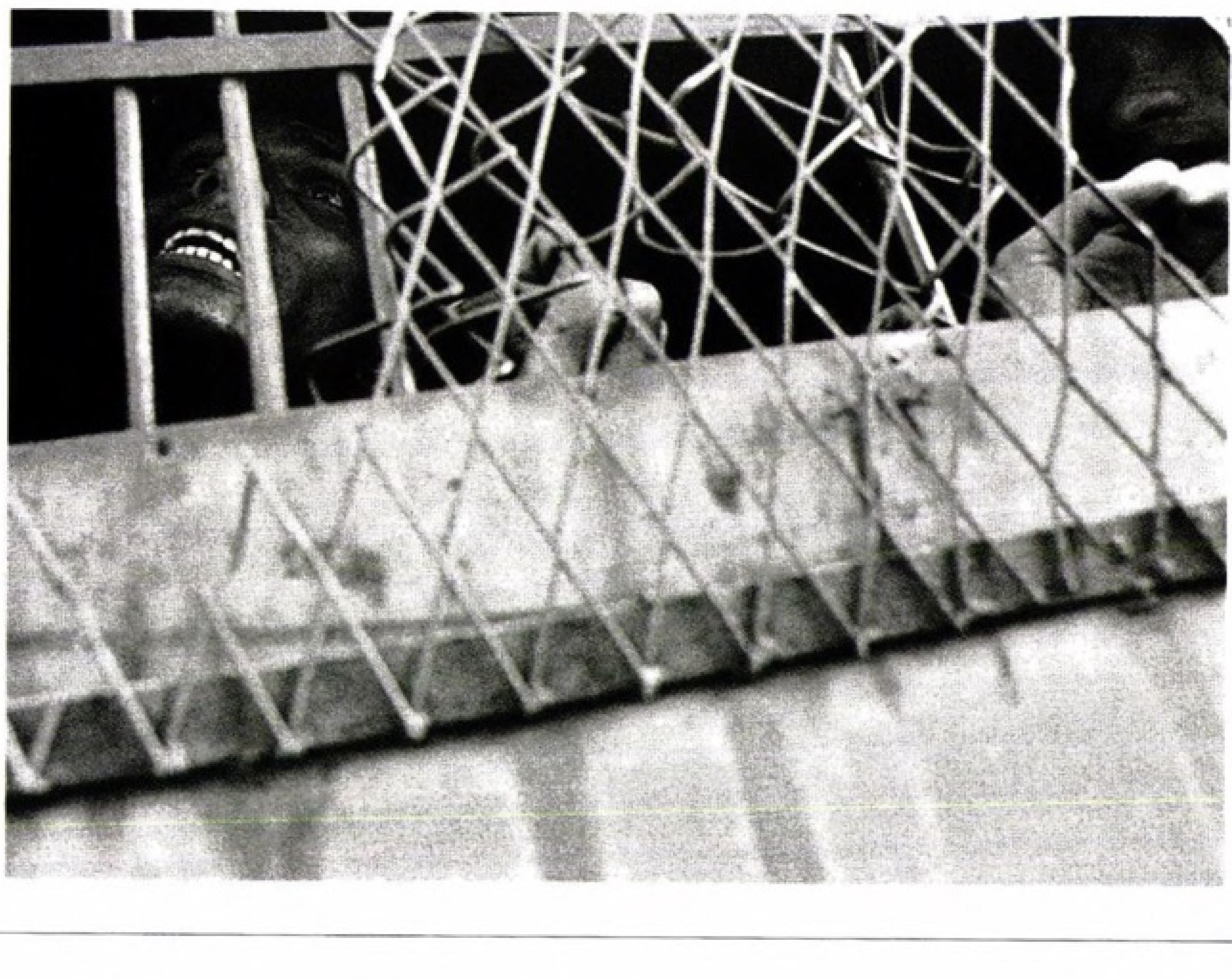
The Government became desperate. Until then only minions had been arrested, but now they turned their attention to the big fish. They miscalculated. When Mohiuddin, the popular mayor of Chittagong, was arrested, people could no longer be contained, and the port city was set alight. The unrest began to spread, and when the entire country became paralysed due to the opposition's call for non-cooperation, even high-

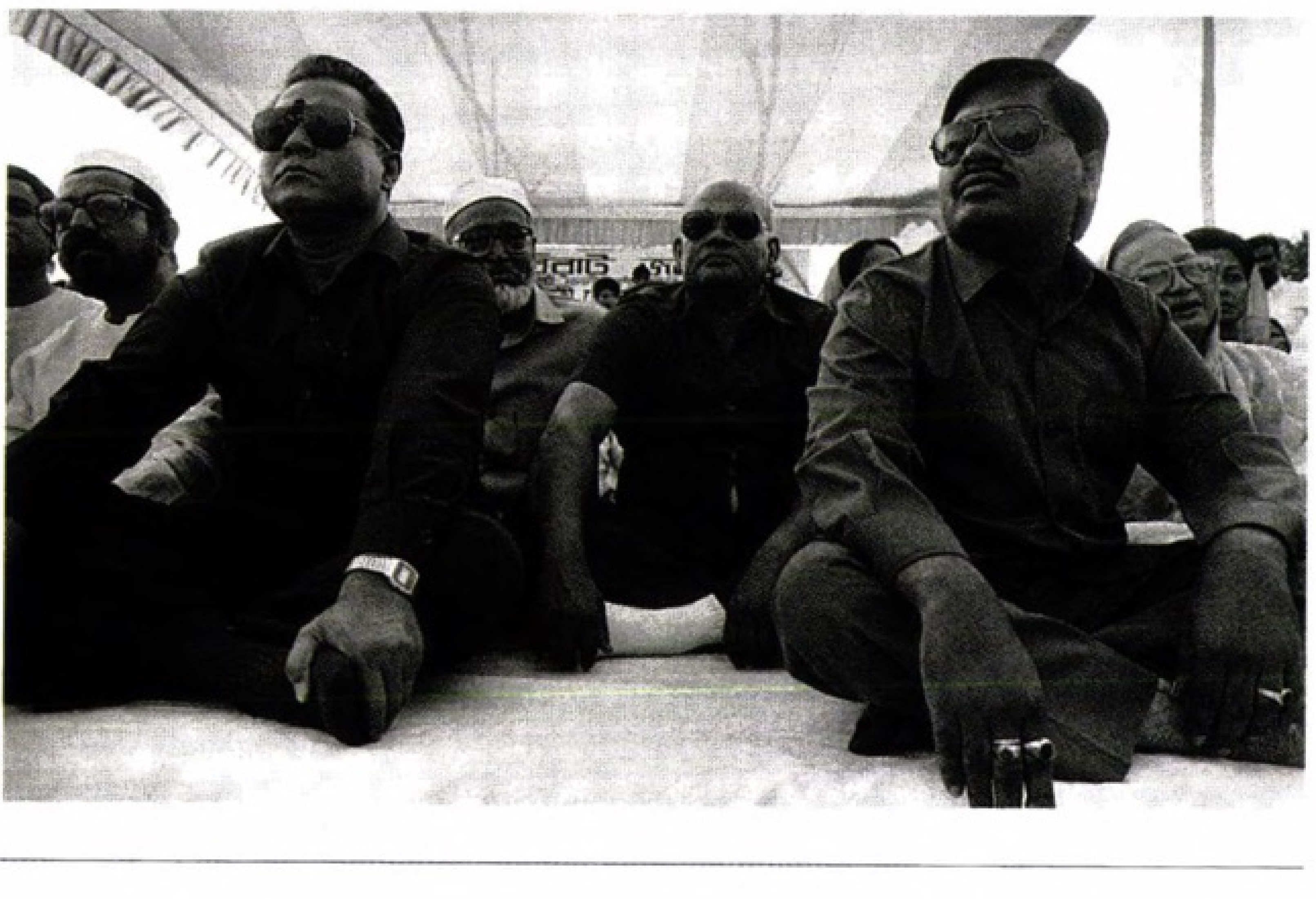


WOMEN feel they have most to lose if the Islamic fundamentalists gain ground. On International Women's Day in 1994 Shamima Nazneed enacts a play by Tagore (*Stri'r Potro*, 'The Wife's Letter') which shows the oppressive influence of the family *(left)*.

The Government becomes increasingly repressive and starts to rig by-elections, leading all opposition parties to resign from Parliament. A general election is called and there is a brutal clampdown on dissent. This student *(below left)* is arrested on 31 January 1996 in a police sweep on a mainly Hindu hall of Dhaka University – he screams out to friends from the prison van. Resistance hits the streets *(above)*.

The opposition boycott of the election is complete: polling stations stand idle. Yet the Government reports a huge turnout of voters and a landslide victory. The contrast with the last election is painful as *(below)* heavy security cordons guard Khaleda Zia while she addresses her followers. She is just visible over their shoulders in the centre, aloof and distant heir to an autocratic tradition.





ranking government officials began to defect. By the time they realized their mistake and released Mohiuddin, it was too late.

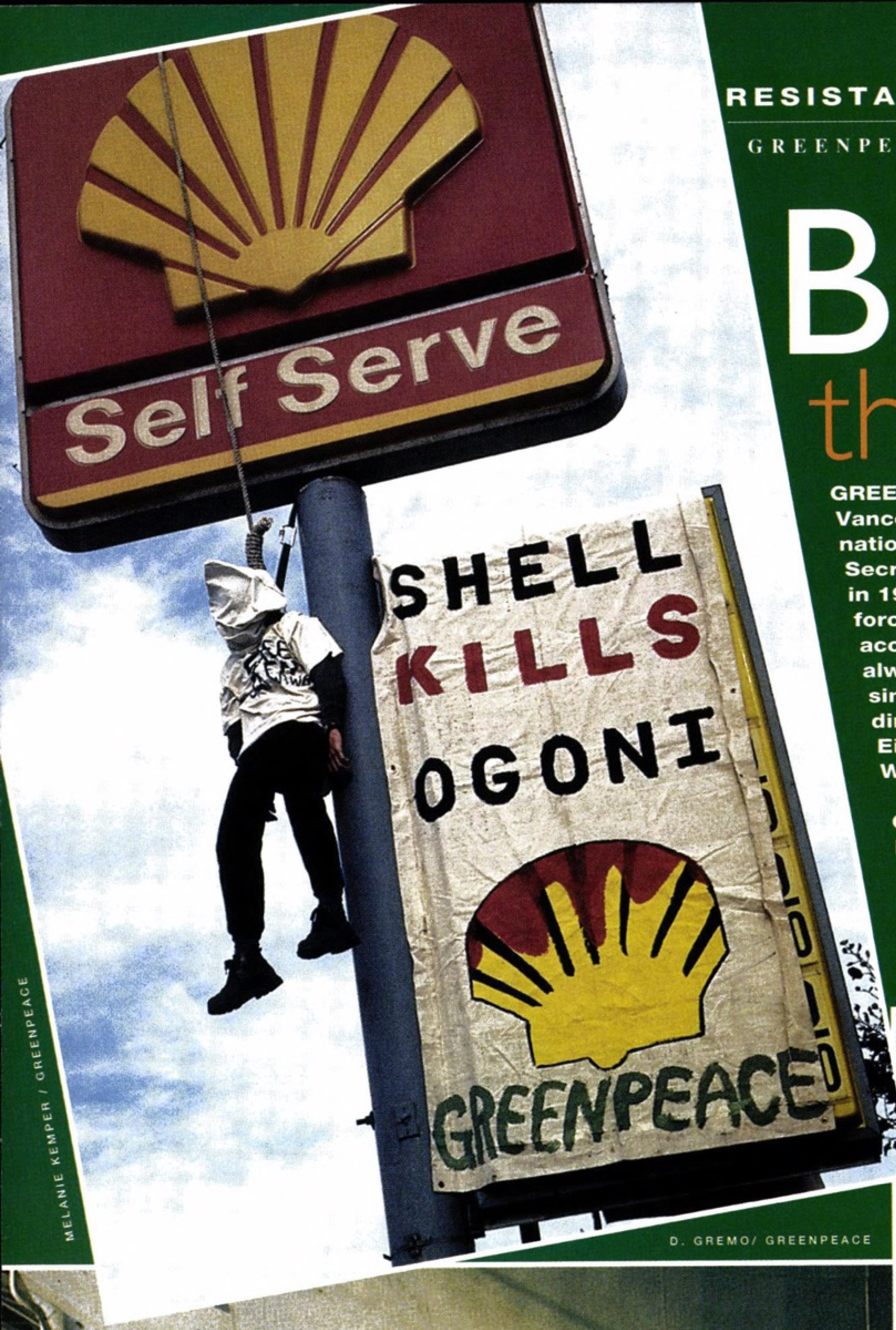
We gathered in Shahid Minar, the martyrs' memorial, which became a seat of resistance – just as it had been way back in 1952, when Bengalees fought for the right to speak our own language.

We knew that a fair election would not in itself solve the country's problems. The main political parties differ little in their positions on class or gender. We wondered if the official opposition, the Awami League, cared that over half-a-million garment workers had lost their jobs due to factory closures. We wondered why opposition leader Sheikh Hasina, who was so keen to protect ministers' property from protesters, had never intervened when workers went hungry.

But now was the time for solidarity: this movement was about removing an autocrat, rejecting a rigged election, challenging an illegal government. So we all worked together. And last night, 30 March, news reached the *Janatar Moncho* (People's Stage) that the Prime Minister had finally stepped down. We did it! But the euphoria was short-lived. Soon they brought in bodies of yet more resistance workers killed that day, and the crowd silently wept.

So many have died so that we would not be denied our right to vote. It is our basic right, but this democratic movement's definition of democracy is all too narrow. The Government's resignation is a victory, a ray of hope to take into the dark days ahead. But the resistance is far from over. ■

An old friend of the **NI**, **Shahidul Alam** is guiding light of Drik, a remarkable photographic agency in Dhaka.



MELANIE KEMPER / GREENPEACE

Buzzing the behemoth

GREENPEACE GETS UP PEOPLE'S NOSES. Founded in Vancouver in 1971, the organization exploded into international prominence and mass membership when the French Secret Service bombed its ship *Rainbow Warrior* in Auckland in 1985. Its direct confrontation of the huge and impersonal forces that threaten the world's safety has often led to accusations of publicity hunger. Certainly Greenpeace has always been aware of the power of the daring stunt and the single image to attract attention and inspire – those tiny dinghies confronting the monster warship USS Eisenhower *(bottom)*; the stark anticipation of Ken Saro-Wiwa's execution in Nigeria *(left)*.

But why should the Devil have all the best images? Greenpeace's daring and media-grasp have helped inspire a new generation of direct-activists. And it is a token of their success that when France restarted its nuclear tests in the Pacific last year the protests were not left to a lonely Greenpeace boat but exploded all over the world – not least on the rioting streets of Tahiti *(below)*. ■

DANIEL BELTRA / ENVIRONMENTAL PICTURE LIBRARY

D. GREMO/ GREENPEACE

GREENPEACE

MARK EDWARDS / STILL PICTURES

Faith in the forest

All over the world people are defending the forests. Here **Joe Franke** tells the story of the Thai monk who ordained trees to protect them; while overleaf are other key flashpoints of forest resistance.

FEBRUARY 1994: Buri Ram Province, Thailand. I'm with an international group joining Phra Pachak Kuttijitto, a Buddhist monk and environmental activist, on a ten-day *tudong* or forest walk.

I've come here looking for a radically different perspective on activism. One of Phra Pachak's tactics in his battles against illegal logging in these forests is to ordain trees as initiate monks. It's an act of crazy wisdom, protecting the trees from illicit logging by wrapping them in the sacred yellow cloth.

Phra Pachak is a complex man with a checkered past. He was once married with children; a hard-drinking construction worker with a weakness for gambling. His life took a radically different turn after he was near-fatally shot while attempting to collect on a gambling debt. In hospital he had time to think about his life and was soon ordained as an initiate monk.

'I began to wander, seeking out teachers all over Thailand. I walked through war zones with bullets flying all around. I slept in caves where the rats would piss in my rice bowl. I was a wild bull. I thought I had all the right answers. I built up a lot of power. Despite my increasing strength,' he continued, 'unease began to grow in me. It grew and grew until it became despair. Quite by accident, I came upon an abandoned monastery surrounded by a small forest. In this monastery there was one book. I opened it, and the first thing I read was: "Do not be satisfied or unsatisfied. Detach from praise or criticism. Practise non-self."

'This was the beginning of the right path. I stayed in that monastery and rebuilt it with the help of the people of a nearby village. It was there that I began to realize my duty to the forest. You cannot take the forest out of Buddhism. The Buddha reached enlightenment in the forest. I saw that we must exist as a leaf exists...' – and with this Phra Pachak gently picks up a leaf from the forest floor and holds it up – '...we must take only what we need. And we must remember... impermanence.' With this he gently opens his hand and lets the leaf return to the soil.

When Phra Pachak wandered into the

forest in 1989, rural Thailand was in the throes of the Khor Jhor Khor Project, a massive scheme to resettle close to seven million people so as to make way for industrial eucalyptus plantations. Twelve villages in the area were next on the list for destruction, and these communities, lacking a spiritual teacher and desperate for someone to organize their resistance, begged him to stay.

Phra Pachak saw it as his duty to remain and honor their request. He asked the villagers to donate an area for a *khet apaiyataan* or 'land of forgiveness' where tree-felling and the harming of wildlife would be forbidden. It was in this area that he began to wrap some of the largest and oldest trees with the sacred yellow cloth of the Buddhist clergy. These 'ordained' trees have not been cut, because local people working for illegal loggers feel that this would be tantamount to killing a monk, one of the most unspeakable crimes imaginable.

JOE FRANKE

Pachak before he disrobed.

During this period Phra Pachak also began working with the chiefs of the 25 villages in the district to build a community-based conservation organization. Small groups of sympathetic villagers and monks patrol an area of 20,000 *rai* (about 2,000 hectares) with walkie-talkies and cameras in an attempt to discourage illegal logging. Blockades have been put up in an effort to hamper the transportation of logs from the forest. The Royal Forestry Department and the loggers have not taken kindly to these activities: three villagers have been killed in confrontations with loggers, wells have been poisoned, and land mines set near the temple. A machine gun was fired into the temple while Phra Pachak was holding a service; miraculously, nobody was killed.

Despite the constant threat of arrest, Phra Pachak has continued his work. His goal is to show the authorities that humans and forest can co-exist, and that the people of the villages should be given a fighting chance to stay in the countryside instead of swelling the ranks of the impoverished masses flooding into Bangkok.

'Once when I was walking from one end of Thailand to the other, a dog began to follow me,' he tells us. 'We walked together for days, and I shared what little food I had with him. In one village, I was given a large piece of pork and a bowl of rice. The pork I gave to the dog. He snapped it up, walked off and buried it and came back hoping to get the rice as well. He was so interested in getting my rice that when we left, he'd forgotten all about the meat he'd buried. These people who come to the forest to cut it over and plant eucalyptus have the same mentality as this dog. They are so filled with greed that they will never be satisfied.'

Within six months of my *tujong* with him Phra Pachak had disrobed, ending 17 years as a monk; he had been forced underground and finally imprisoned. How did all this happen?

The pressure on him became intense after he publicly criticized the Thai Government on a speaking tour of Japan and then supported Chalard Vorachat, who was on hunger strike for greater democracy. The governor of Pachak's home province made it clear that he intended to throw him in jail.

After a period of intense reflection at a temple during the Buddhist lent period, Pachak apparently made the decision to disrobe. He left a note in the temple's guest register, saying simply, 'This is to state clearly that I will end my life as a monk on this day, 19 July 1994'. He went back to Buri Ram, gathered the small amount of money he had, and disappeared.

It is widely speculated that his family was threatened or that a deal had been done promising the local forest protection if he quit the monkhood. In any case, the limited protection that his robes afforded him was now gone, and the state clobbering machine went into full throttle.

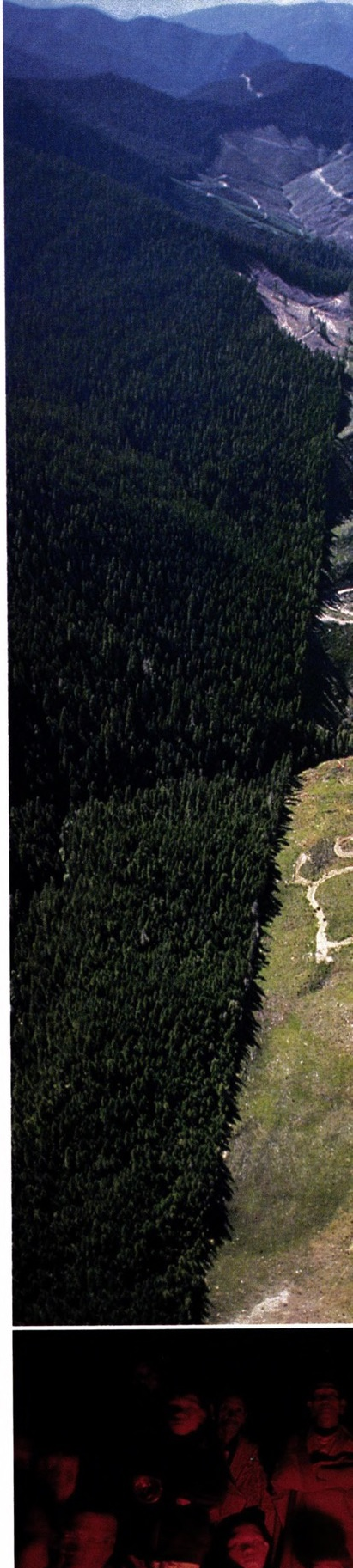
In January 1995 he was arrested on charges of illegal gambling but escaped through the police station's bathroom window. A massive police hunt ensued, replete with lurid television reports. He was soon rearrested and has been in prison since, awaiting trial outside Bangkok.

It is painfully obvious why the government of one of the most powerful nations in Asia has spent so much time and energy assassinating the character and spirit of Prachak. There is a battle raging: at stake are the hearts and minds of the Thai people, and their belief in 'progress'. We in the industrialized West should take heed, as the loss of creative solutions like Prachak's could prove disastrous to us as well. ■

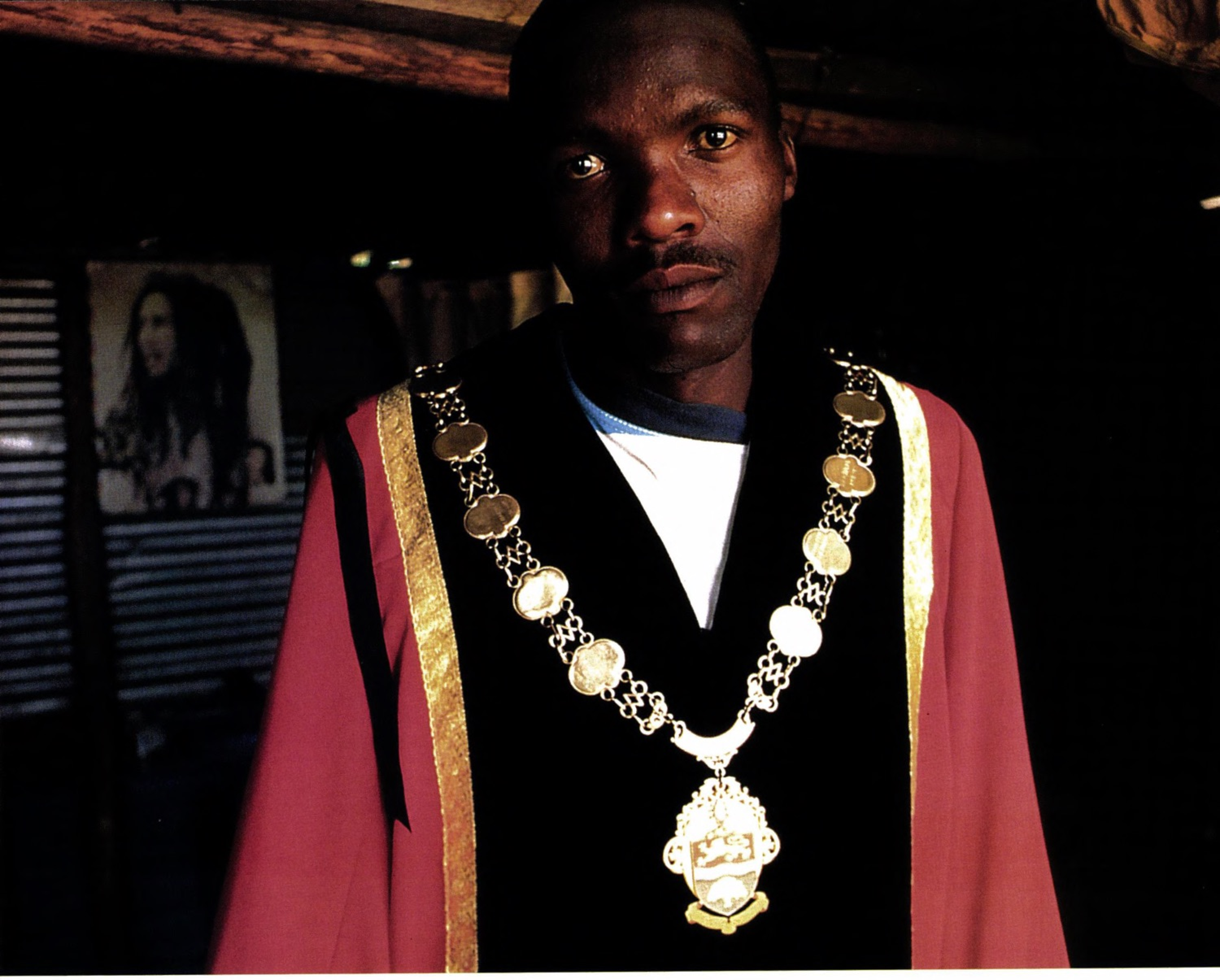
Joe Franke is the Director of Wat Forest Project, which aims to strengthen the role of monks and nuns in the Thai environmental movement. A legal defense fund has been established for Prachak, and donations will be gladly accepted. Wat Forest Project, 7435 SW 31st Ave, Portland OR 97219, USA.

We are not alone. The old adage to act locally but think globally could have been coined with the anti-deforestation movement in mind. Thousands of local struggles are under way against logging companies which are all too often in cahoots with corrupt politicians. Knowing that the movement is so international can make all the difference to campaigners' will to carry on.

All these photos come from Still Pictures. Daniel Dancer's aerial shot *(top left)* shows the impact of clearcutting in California: the battle to preserve the ancient forests is not confined to the Majority World. Mark Edwards' pictures of dancers and artists in Cameroon show a community harnessing traditional culture to spread the word about saving the forest. Jorgen Schytte *(top centre)* documents Mauritanians' determination to reclaim the desert. Nigel Dickinson *(bottom three)* has captured a demonstration in the Philippines together with two images of the Kenyah people of Long Geng village in Sarawak, Malaysia. They are blockading logging roads in spirited defence of the forests that have sustained them for centuries.



STOP ILLEGAL LOGGING
KABATAAN
We Love our Forest
DENR Do not



The new mayor of Ve

He lives in a squatter shack. He is a communist. And he is obviously not white. Yet Meshack Mbambalala is the new council leader of Ventersdorp, home of South Africa's neo-Nazis. **Gideon Mendel** of Network Photographers captured his first few days in office.

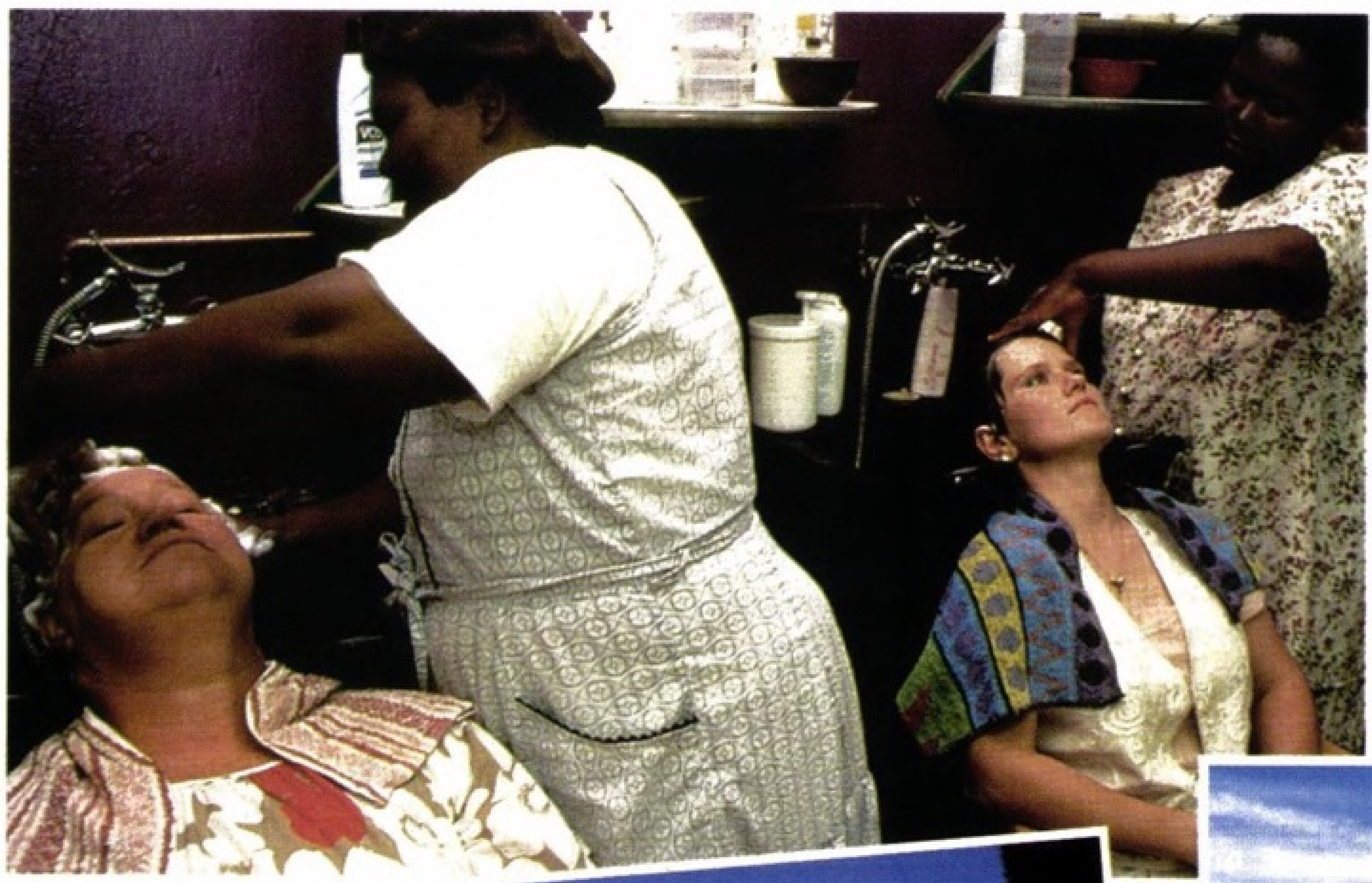
MESHACK MBAMBALALA sounds rueful. 'You know, I never really wanted this. I only ever dreamed of standing in front of a classroom with a piece of chalk in my hand.'

Still a part-time teacher in the black township of Tshing, where he lives in a corrugated-iron shack (*above*), 26-year-old Mbambalala is now coming to terms with his new role as mayor of Ventersdorp. Whereas the white town contains just 2,000 people, Tshing's population is 15,000 . So when the two areas voted together in November 1995's local elections a black mayor was inevitable, despite whites' 'guaranteed representation' on the council.

Now the new civic order must bear the burden of his black constituents' sky-high hopes for change. But he also has to deal with the abuse poured on his head by white residents nostalgic for apartheid and still dreaming of an Afrikaner *volkstaat* or homeland. He has already suffered death threats and despite being teetotal and law-abiding is routinely smeared in white homes and bars as a drunken thief.

Ventersdorp is, after all, no ordinary place. It is the home town and heartland of Eugene Terreblanche, hate-spitting leader of the neo-Nazi Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB). Extreme racist statements of a kind that would cause outrage in almost every other corner of the globe are here the stuff of polite conversation.

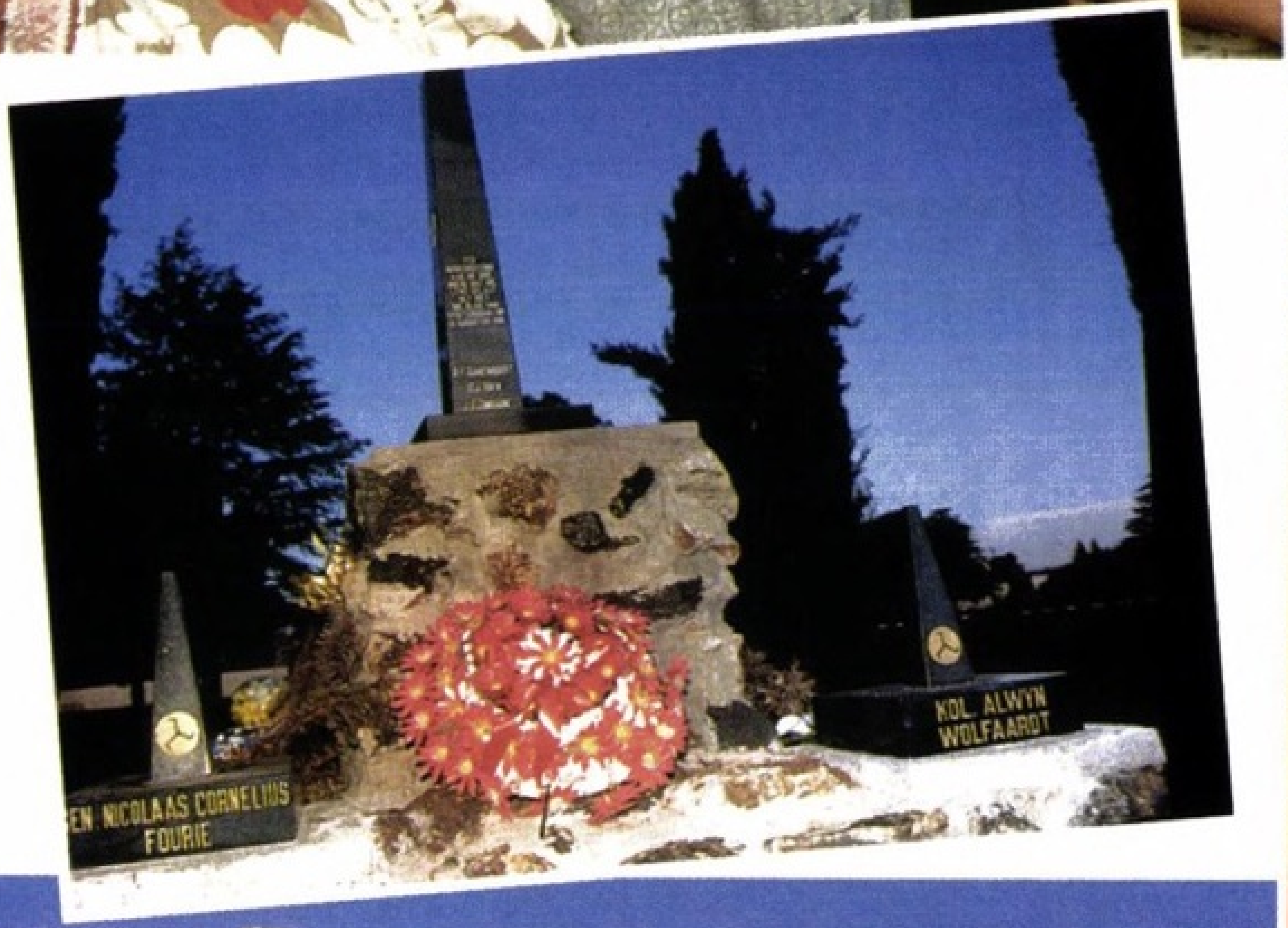
Mayor Mbambalala is not even tempted to respond in kind. 'We have to move forward and leave the past. My goal is to make a new Ventersdorp, to turn the town of the AWB into the home of reconciliation in South Africa.' As token of his commitment he has just named his first son Nhlanganiso, the Xhosa word for 'reconciliation'. ■

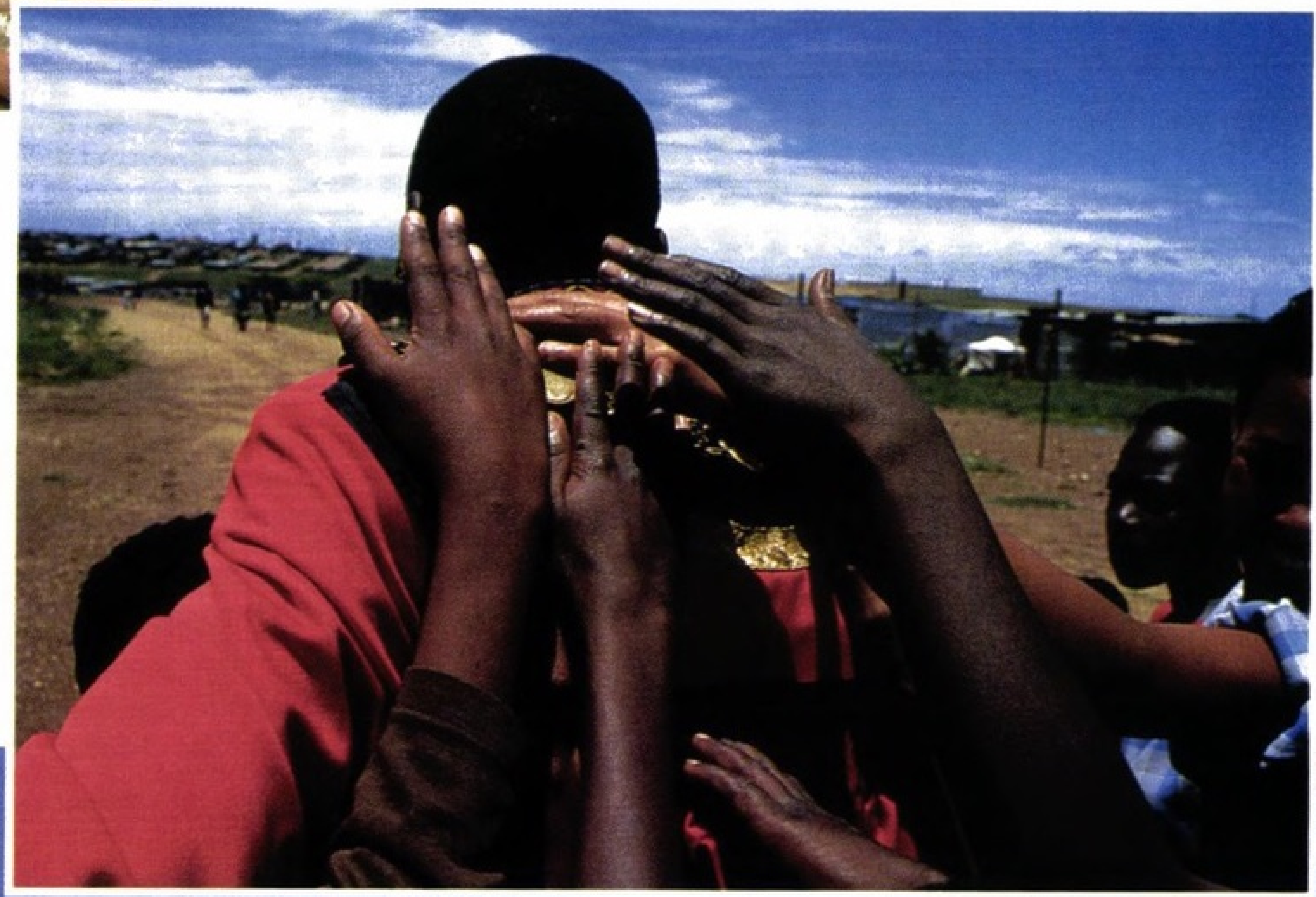


Ventersdorp is a small farming town in northern Transvaal – just one main street and a few shops, including this hairdressing salon (*left*), where black women serve white townsfolk as they have for generations. In the main square (*below left*) is a monument dedicated to the 'martyrs' of the neo-Nazi AWB, including those shot dead in Bophuthatswana just before the national elections of 1994. The new mayor has no plans to pull this down: the AWB are part of the town's history, he says.

Ventersdorp may be increasingly rundown but in the neighbouring township of Tshing (*bottom*), less than 150 of the 2,500 homes have electricity and running water. Meshack still lives here, with pictures of Bob Marley and his favourite Soweto soccer team on the walls of his home (*facing page*). Local ANC members supported Meshack Mbambalala as mayor (*below right*) because 'he had the best political vision and, of all of us, he was the one most likely to stick to his guns'.

GIDEON MENDEL WORKED ON THIS STORY WITH ROBERT BLOCK OF *THE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY*, TO WHOM WE ARE INDEBTED FOR THE QUOTES FROM MESHACK MBAMBALALA.





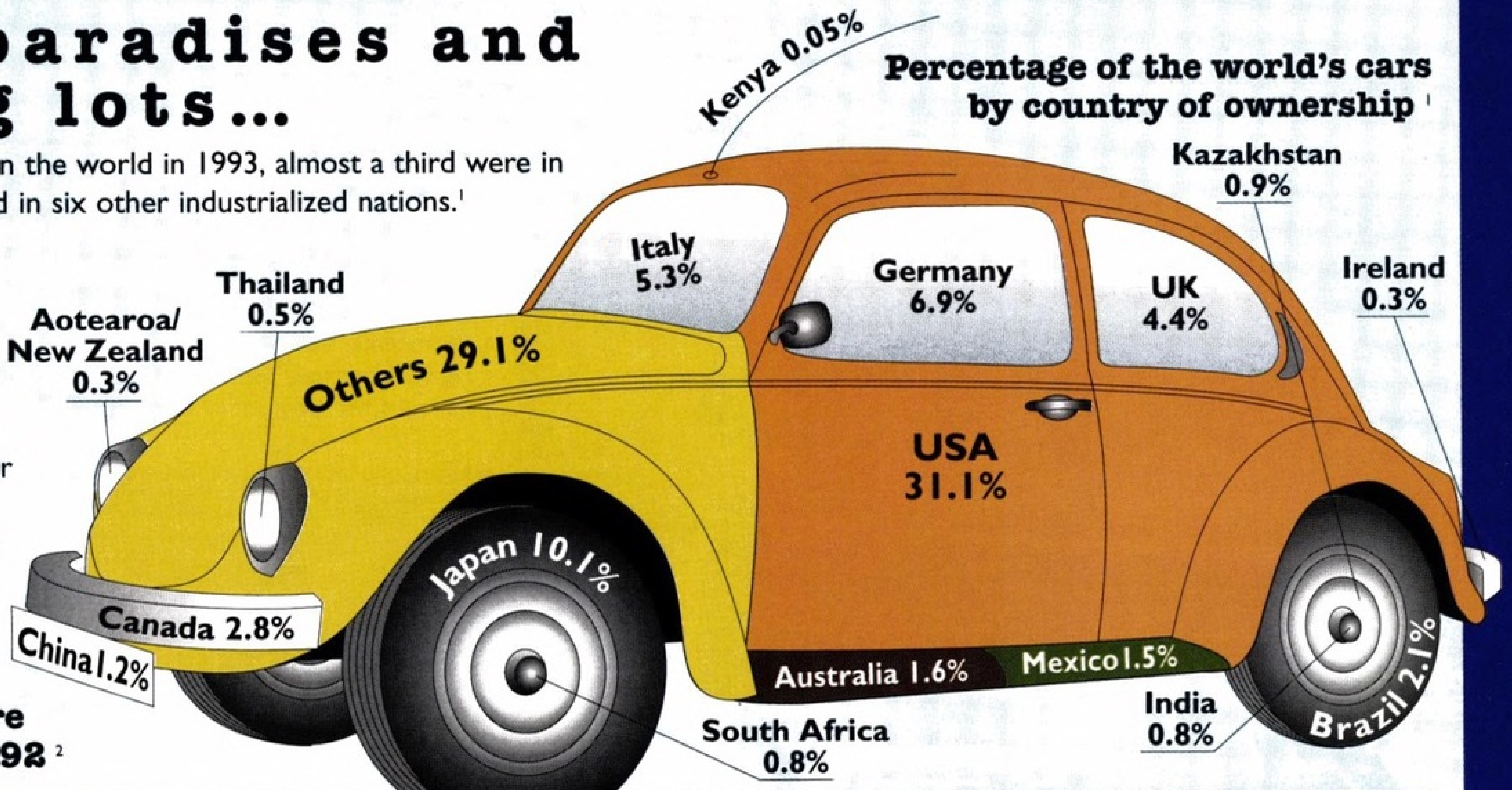
ntersdorp

are you part of the proble

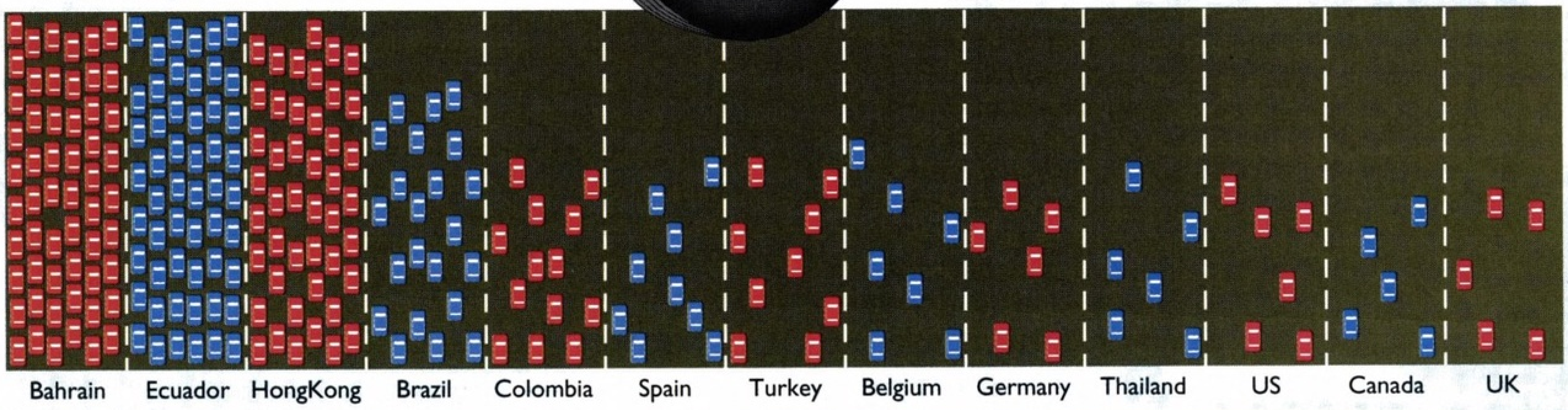
Paved paradises and parking lots...

Of the 607 million cars in the world in 1993, almost a third were in the US and another third in six other industrialized nations.[1]

Most of the paved roads in the world have been built in the last four decades – yet in 1992 there were five times as many cars per kilometre of paved road as there were in 1953.



Cars per kilometre of paved road, 1992 [2]

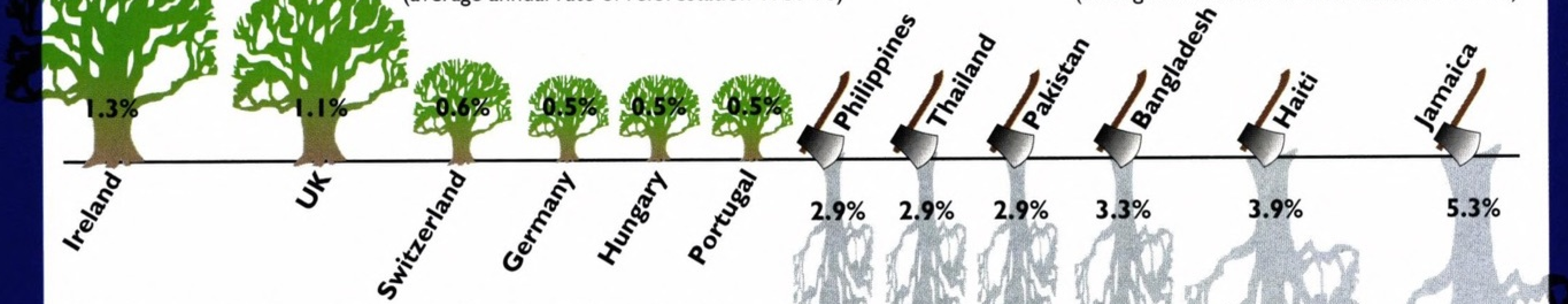


Forest as fuel...

People all over the world are taking direct action to save forests which continue to be decimated. In ten countries the forest is being destroyed at a rate of more than two per cent a year. The reforestation going on in some Western countries is almost entirely of conifers rather than of traditionally diverse woods that include broad-leaved deciduous trees.

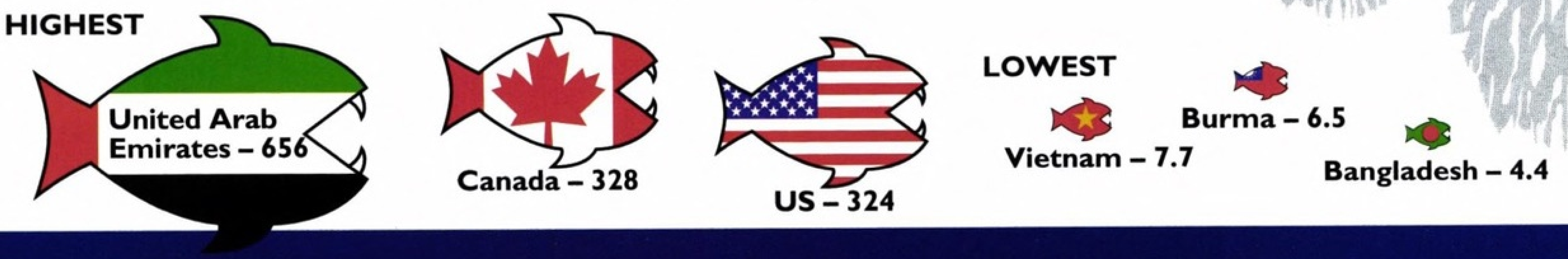
The best reforesters...
(average annual rate of reforestation 1981-90)

...and the worst deforesters [2]
(average annual rate of deforestation 1981-90)



But who are the saints and who are the sinners here? Bangladesh, for example, has little alternative to wood to serve its energy needs – and at 4.4 gigajoules (4,400 million joules) its consumption of energy per person per year is the lowest in the world. Germany, meanwhile, may be replanting but it is the world's third-largest importer of energy. The US alone consumes a quarter of the world's energy.

Energy consumption per head (1991, in gigajoules) [2]

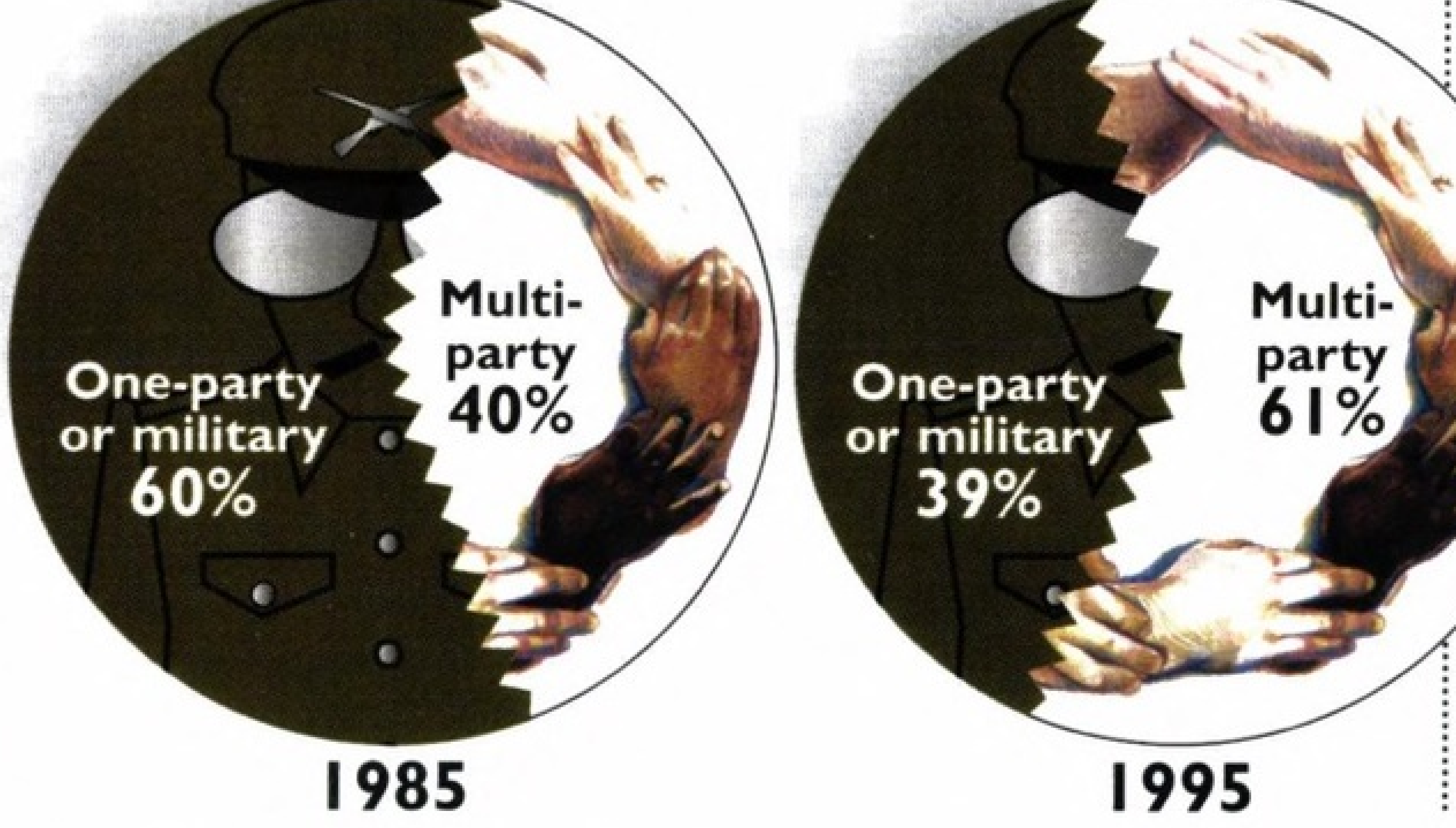


n... or part of the solution?

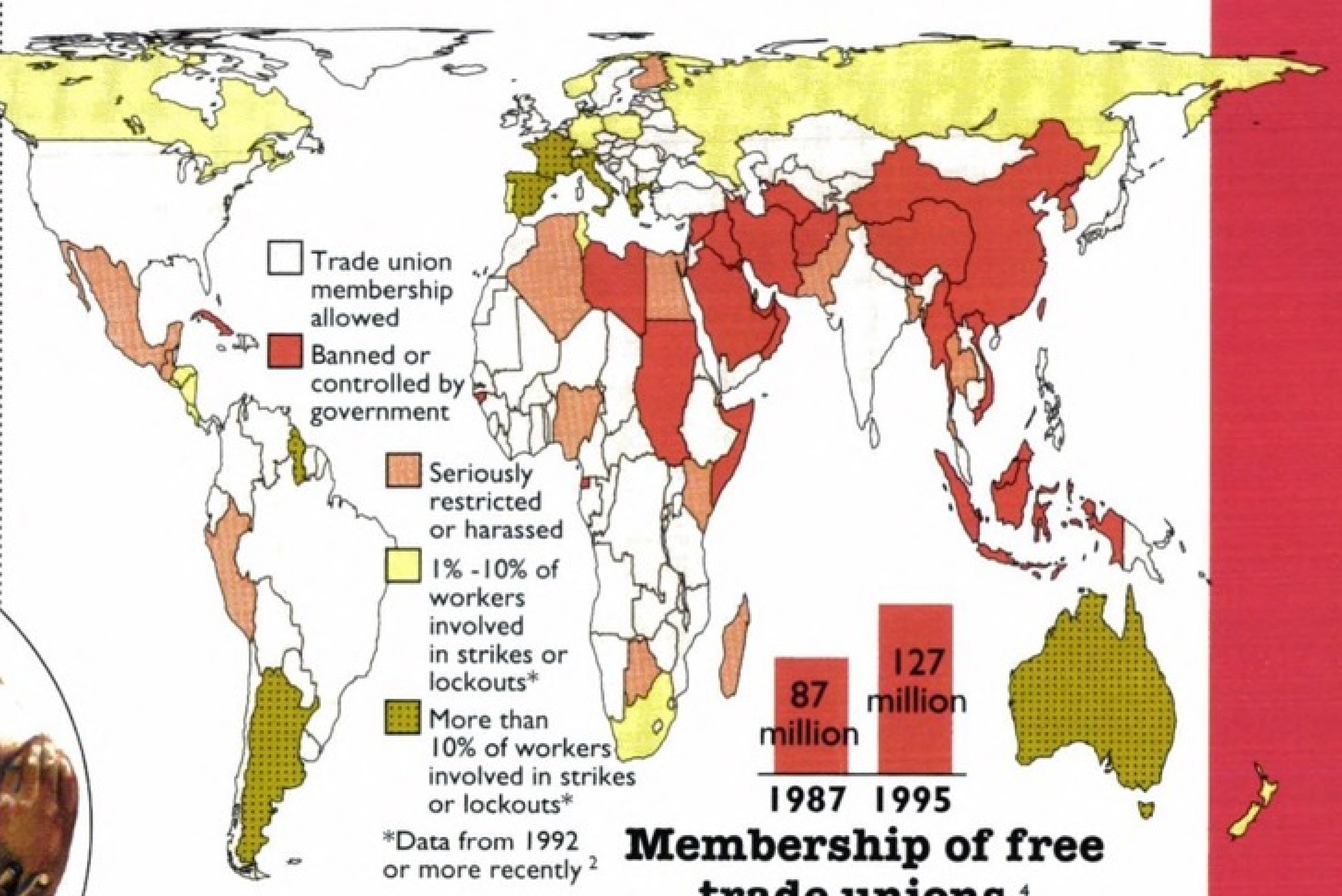
Dictators on the run

Dictatorships do not fall of their own accord. People put their lives on the line to organize against them secretly. In the early 1980s, for example, most of Latin America was ruled by military dictatorship. Now virtually the whole of the continent has embraced democratic rule of a kind – a tribute to the quality and courage of people's resistance in the darkest years.

Percentage of the world's population living under multi-party rule and one-party or military systems [3]



Comradeship

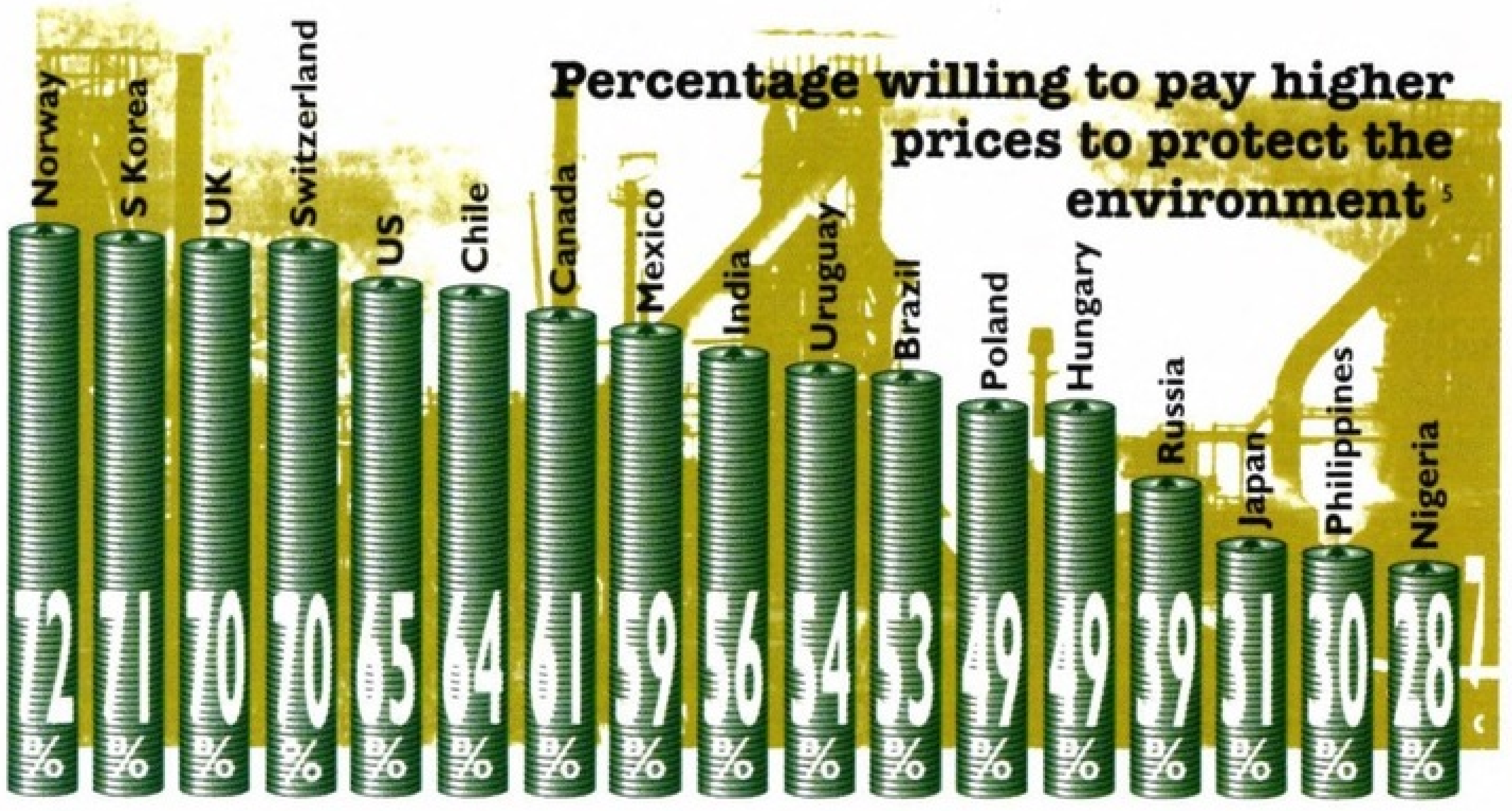

☐ Trade union membership allowed
🟥 Banned or controlled by government
▨ Seriously restricted or harassed
▨ 1% -10% of workers involved in strikes or lockouts*
▨ More than 10% of workers involved in strikes or lockouts*
*Data from 1992 or more recently [2]
87 million
127 million
1987
1995

Membership of free trade unions [4]

Trade-union membership declined during the right-wing ascendancy in countries like Britain during the 1980s. But it is now surging in international terms as civil societies become stronger in newly democratic countries, particularly in Africa and Eastern Europe.

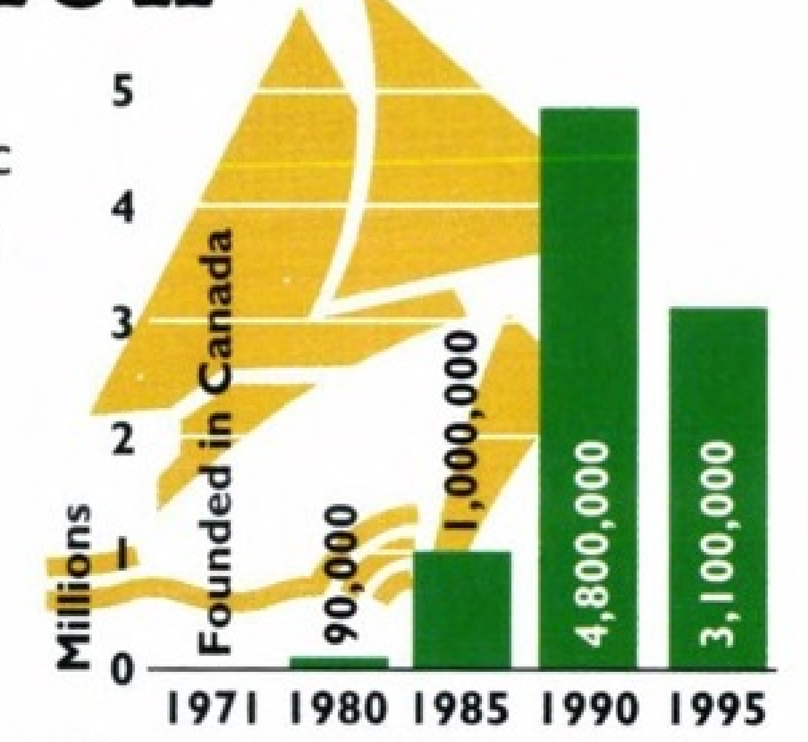
Greening the mind

Public perception of the world's environmental problems has soared over the last decade – and so has their willingness to do something about them. An international opinion survey in 1993 found a majority willing to pay higher prices to protect the environment in 11 of the 17 countries surveyed. Broadly speaking, the higher the country's income, the more willing people were to pay the price for a cleaner world – though in Japan there is clearly a lot of campaigning still to be done.


Percentage willing to pay higher prices to protect the environment [5]

Direct action

Direct action has had much to do with the broad shift in public opinion about the environment. Greenpeace has pioneered international direct action on environmental issues. Its international membership is down on its post-*Rainbow Warrior*, pre-recession peak in 1990 but is still three times what it was ten years ago.



Greenpeace membership, worldwide [6]

Civil strength

Civil society around the world is becoming stronger. One token of this is the mushrooming number of non-governmental organizations or NGOs – especially in developing countries.

- Between 1991 and 1996 the number of consumer groups belonging to Consumers International grew from 181 to 211. In 1991 there was only one African consumer group, in Mauritius; now there are 21 groups in 14 countries.[7]
- The NGO Forum at the decadal UN Women's Conference had 5,000 delegates at Mexico City in 1975, 13,000 at Nairobi in 1985 and 40,000 at Beijing in 1995.
- Women activists worldwide presented a petition to the UN World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 which carried 500,000 signatures from 124 countries.[8]
- One Indian state, Tamil Nadu, has 25,000 registered grass-roots organizations.[9]
- The Philippines has 18,000 registered NGOs, of which at least two-thirds are people's organizations such as co-operatives.[9]

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1 *World Resources 1994-95.* 2 *The State of the World Atlas*, Michael Kidron & Ronald Segal, Penguin 1995. 3 1985 figure *World Human Rights Guide*, Charles Humana. 1995 figure NI's own estimate. 4 Defined as membership of a union affiliated to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. 5 Gallup International Survey, quoted in *The State of the Environment Atlas*, Joni Seager, Penguin 1995. 6 Greenpeace International. 7 Consumers International. 8 *Putting Gender on the Agenda*, UNIFEM. 9 *Human Development Report 1993*, UNDP.

Roads to freedom

Direct action against new roads is giving birth to a new culture of resistance in the West. **Ursula Wills-Jones** reports from the British frontline.

One very cold night in the spring of 1993 I walked across Twyford Down. We climbed the fence and wandered across to where the topsoil had already been stripped. Security guards with cameras followed us, so we covered our faces. Huge yellow earthmovers lurked in a hole which had been dug in the hillside.

Now there is nothing left of Twyford Down except a very large hole. Standing above, it is very strange to think that you once put your foot on the ground where now there is only empty space. Below, cars roar past along a six-lane motorway.

The biggest thing to come out of Twyford Down was, however, not the road that destroyed an historic and protected piece of Hampshire but rather the British anti-roads movement, a many-headed hydra of protest which has shaken the establishment and changed public perceptions.

Twyford was the first scheme in a huge government plan to build £23 billion ($50 billion) worth of new roads across the country. It provoked the first major direct-action protests in Britain against road-building, largely ignored by the media. Many people who had protested there returned shocked by the destruction and inspired to begin campaigning in their own backyard. Protests began to spring up all over the country – in Bath and Glasgow, Preston and Norfolk. 'At Twyford,' says 26-year-old activist Stephen Booker, 'people saw that direct action could work and that you could take on the establishment by doing something as simple as sitting in front of a bulldozer.'

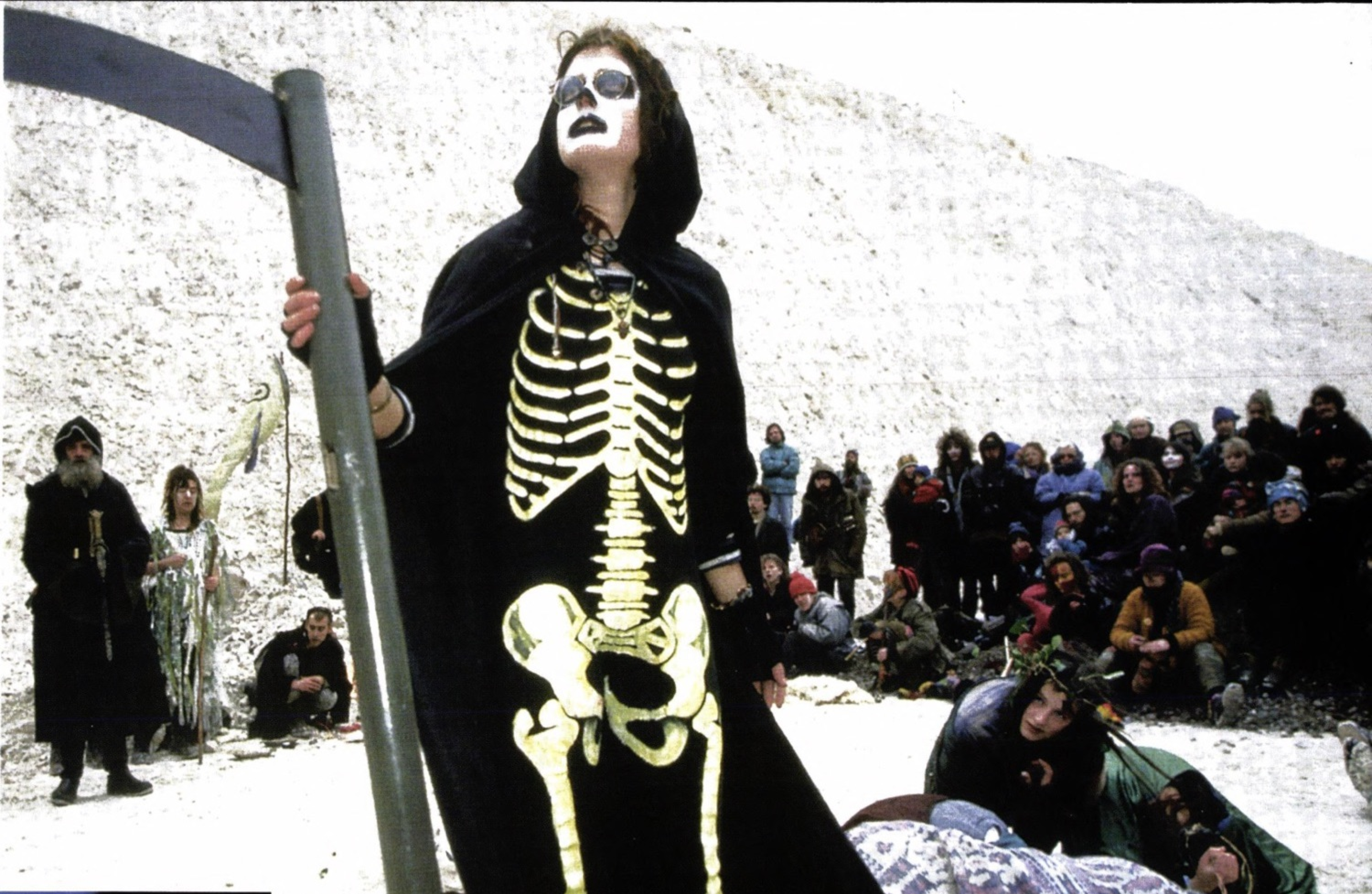
The largest campaign was in London, where a four-mile extension to the M11 motorway was due to be constructed. More than 300 houses had to be demolished for the road. This meant that the issues involved became broader. People were no longer protesting about the destruction of the countryside, but about housing and pollution, health and democracy. Most of the houses were squatted by protesters, necessitating long and complex legal cases to evict them. Activists began to build up increasingly sophisticated techniques to resist eviction peacefully, such as the concrete 'lock-on', an ingenious device constructed from diagrams in an Australian booklet helpfully entitled *The Deluxe International Guide To Blockading*.

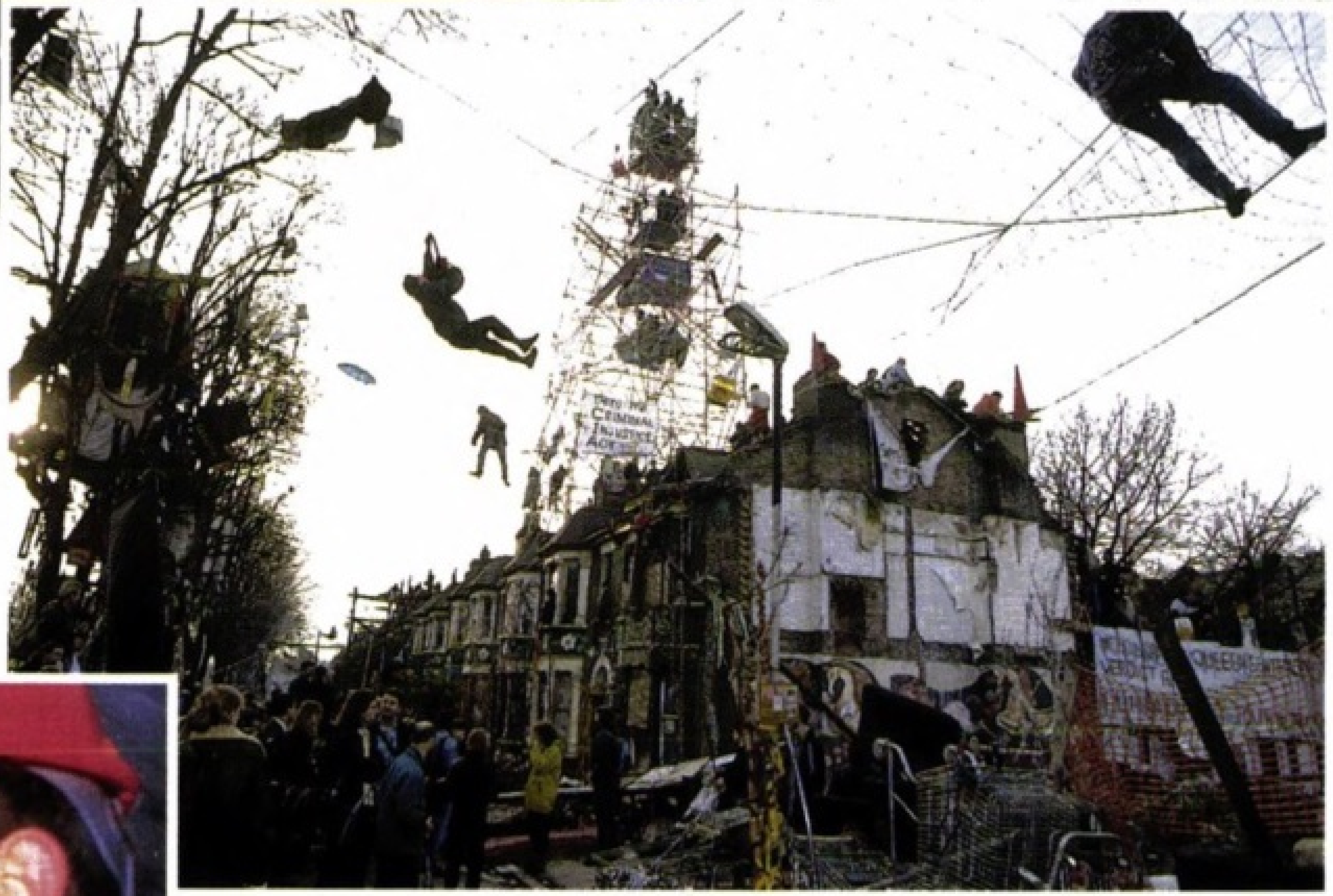
The first major eviction of five houses took 12 hours, as 300 protesters faced more than twice that number of police, bailiffs, and security guards. 'I'd never experienced anything like it,' recalls another demonstrator, Tom Sunnyside. 'The sense of empowering yourself, just going out and doing it. Hardly anyone seemed to know anyone else at the start but by the end there was a kind of bonding between the protesters like nothing I've ever experienced before.'

Later, protesters occupied a whole street. Claremont Road had a café, a workshop, art installations and bizarre defensive constructions sprouting from its roofs. Meanwhile, protest continued to build up steam in other parts of the country.

The issues brought up by the campaigns eschewed traditional right and left lines. A generation of young people who, growing up under Thatcherism, had become highly cynical about conventional politics, saw direct action as a way to make their mark on the political scene. 'With non-violent direct action you can go out there and show people that it is possible to make a difference,' explains Justin, an activist from Nottingham. 'Ordinary people, people who've never been politically active before, can go out and say "we're not taking this any more".'

For many people, the sense of community and solidarity brought about by the protests was unprecedented. Although the majority of protesters were young, it was the involvement of individuals from every part of the community that allowed the protests to be effective. Faced with a common enemy, people who had never spoken to their neighbours before suddenly found that the barriers of race, class and wealth





Top: The Grim Reaper arrives and the Dragon finally gets its own back on St George. In this play enacted by protesters against the destruction of Twyford Down, the Dragon represents the Earth and St George the British Government. **Nigel Dickinson/Still**

Middle left: Dissident sculpture. Demonstrators against the M77 in Glasgow stuck burned cars on their ends to create 'Carhenge'. **Graham Burns/EPL**

Middle right: Safety in the sky. Protesters against the M11 Extension in London strung nets from the roofs so as to move between threatened houses out of the reach of security personnel. **Andrew Wiard/Network**

Bottom: Raw nerve. The direct action may be non-violent but the feeling still runs high, as here at Newbury, the latest of the road wars. **Nick Cobbing/Still**

Above and below: Two images from 'The Third Battle of Newbury' (the first two were in the English Civil War). Protesters are living high up in trees endangered by the proposed by-pass. Both photos by **Nick Cobbing.**

Left: The most eloquent protester of all. The last inhabitant of Claremont Road, 93-year-old Dolly Watson, declined to move from the house she had lived in all her life to make way for the M11 Extension. **Gideon Mendel/Network.**

became less important. Claremont Road's most effective protester was a 93-year-old woman, Dolly Watson, who refused to leave the house she had lived in all her life. Journalists flocked to photograph her drinking tea on her doorstep with dreadlocked, para-booted squatters. In Glasgow, children went on school strike and spent their time obstructing construction work on the M77 until their parents were threatened with legal action.

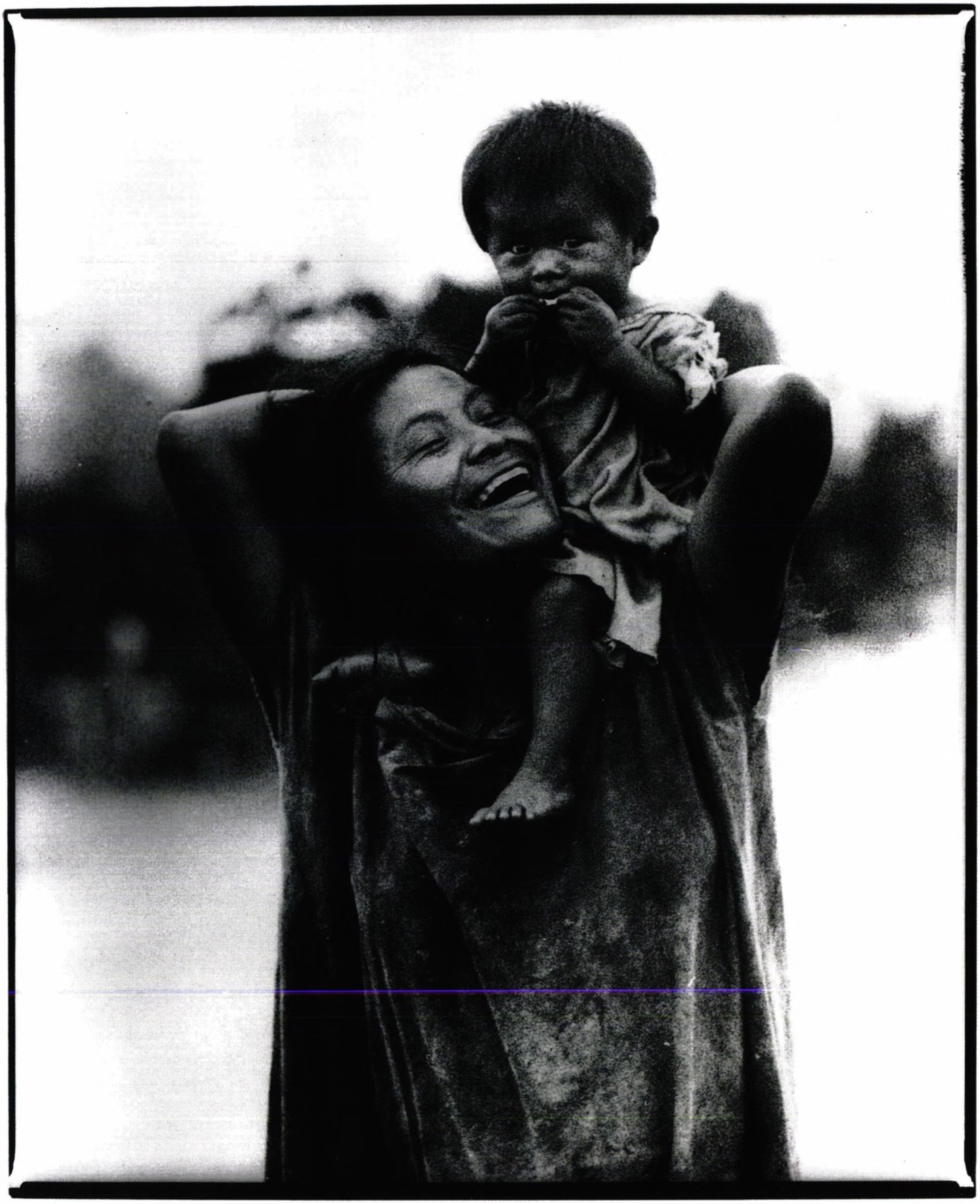
The movement has enjoyed a remarkable degree of success. The Government is loath to admit that protests have had any effect, but a large number of road schemes have tactfully fallen victim to spending cuts. More importantly, there has been a sea change in public opinion towards roads and cars. Most people now accept that the number of cars on the roads simply cannot continue growing. Pollution is now firmly linked in the public mind with the epidemic of asthma in British cities. Transport has become a 'hot' political issue.

This year's showdown is at Newbury, where a bypass is due to be constructed across nine miles of countryside, including two historic battlefields, several Sites of Special Scientific Interest and the habitat of a rare snail. The protest has already added £20 million ($32 million) to the proposed cost of the job.

Direct action has not been restricted to road-building. It has also been used to campaign against tropical timber imports, opencast mining, and the World Bank, to mention just a few. The most recent initiative is the Reclaim the Streets movement, which 'reclaims' – blocks off to traffic – city-centre streets, holding impromptu street parties to protest at the pollution, congestion and dangers caused by cars in urban areas. The Government, for its part, was sufficiently worried by the growth in protest to bring in a set of laws attempting to outlaw it – the 1994 Criminal Justice Bill, which has undoubtedly meant more court appearances for regular protesters but does not seem to have deterred anyone. For many people, a process of radicalization has taken place. A new and optimistic culture of protest and dissent has grown up which is unlikely to go away.

'Direct action is a whole lifestyle,' enthuses Carolyn, a 24-year-old Manchester activist. 'There's a saying that if you see a snowball rolling down a hill, give it a push. It seems to me that more and more people are giving it a push. We're going to change this world, we really are.' ■

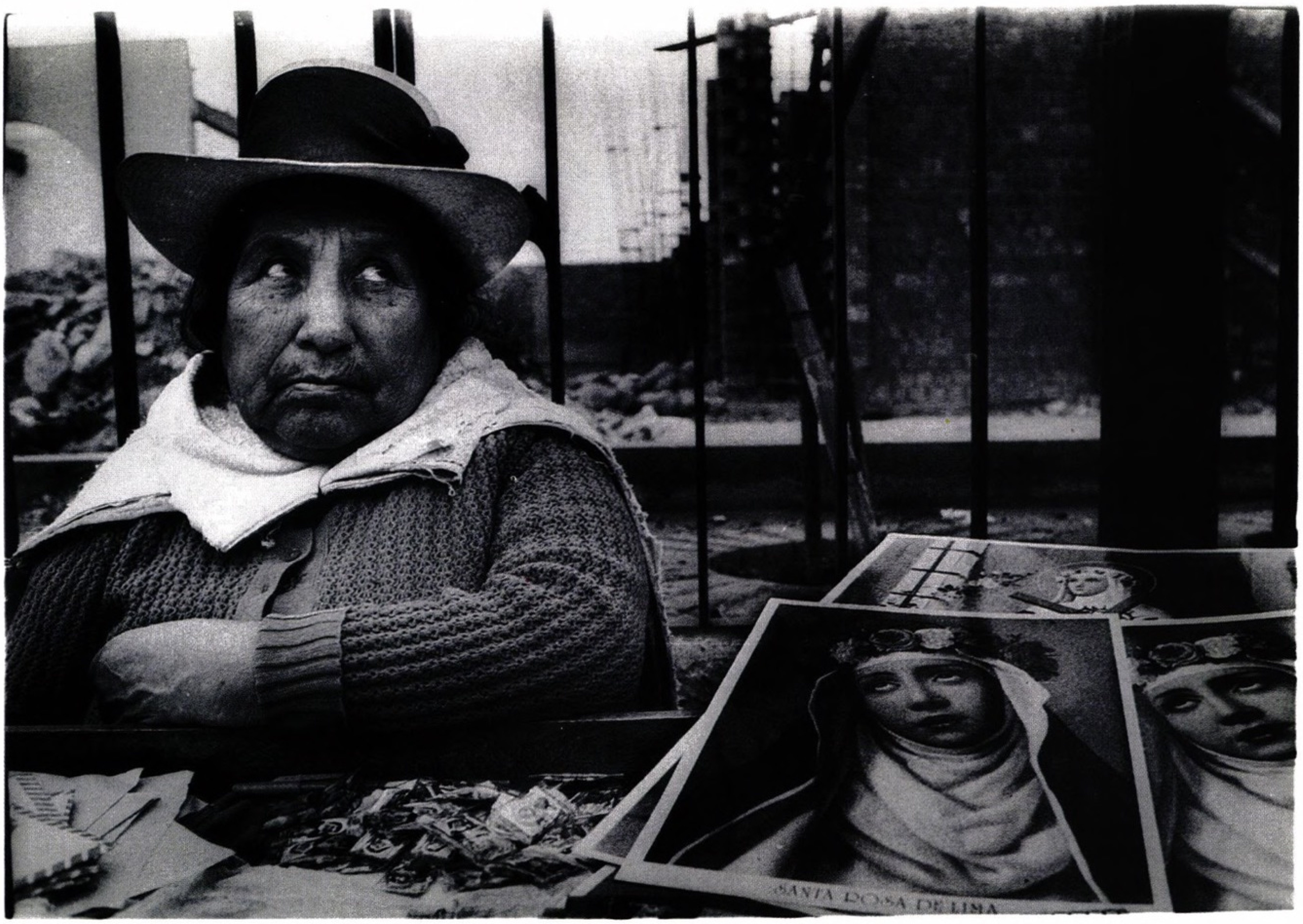
Ursula Wills-Jones is a journalist and activist from Manchester who specializes in writing about the new generation of direct action in Britain.



Through women's eyes

How distinctive is women's vision of the world? A Peruvian social-photography group called TAFOS gathered together 67 images of women as seen by 43 women photographers from all over Latin America. They exhibited them at the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing last year.

Here we showcase a selection of these images. Documenting the everyday reality of women's lives is in itself a challenge to



Above: *Santa Rosita* by **Nancy Chappell.** St Rosa is not the only one with her eyes on heaven in the Peruvian capital, Lima.

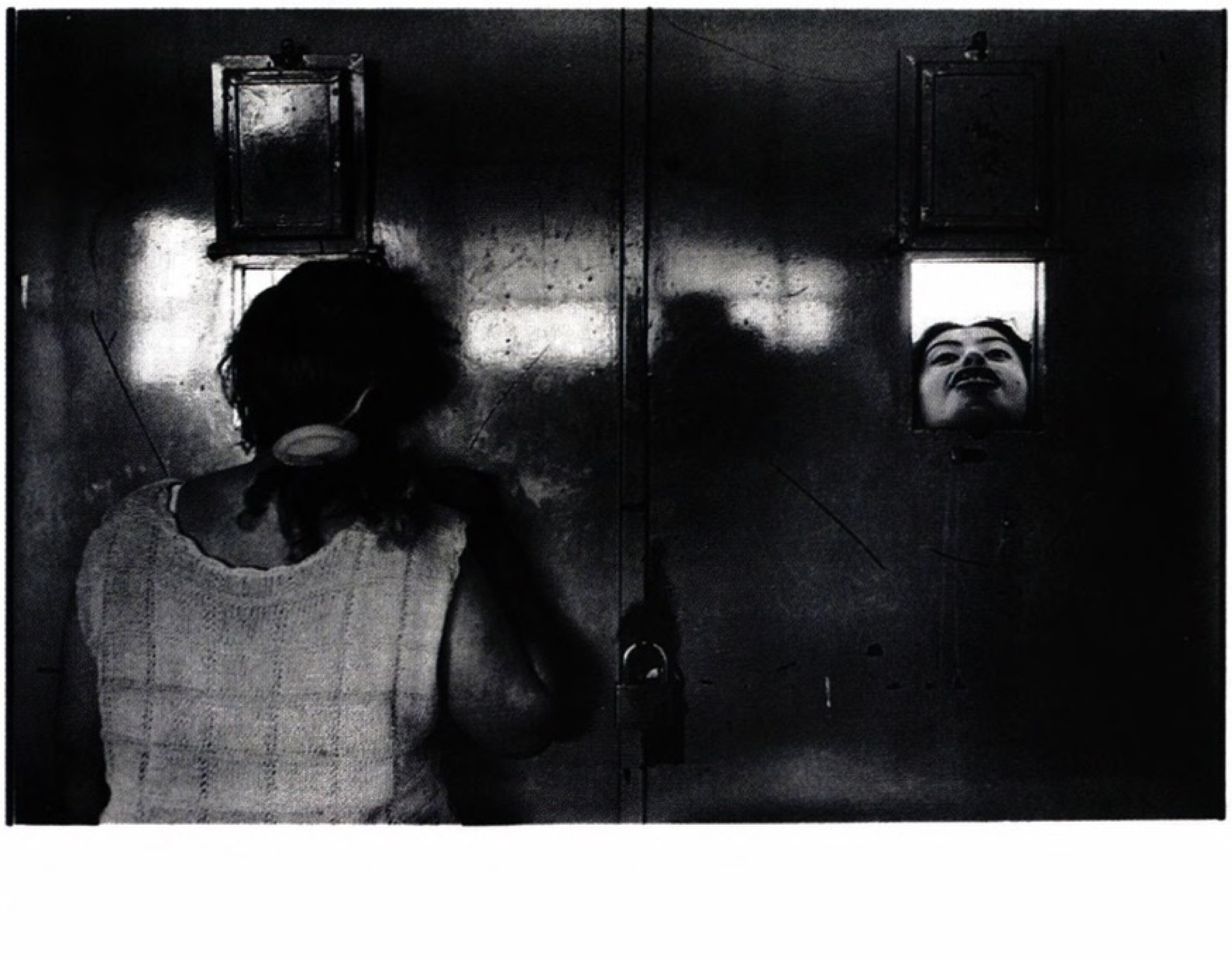
'así uno piensa en Dios,
andando, cocinando, andando por ahí.'
'This is how we think of God,
walking, cooking, walking around.'
(Raul Zurita)

their comparative invisibility in public life. But the women depicted here are themselves showing a quality of resistance – some through political activism, others through laughter or just a determination to carry on.

Each photographer chose a title for her photo together with a couple of lines from a Latin American poem which she felt would enhance the meaning of the picture. According to TAFOS: 'This exhibition wishes to extend a bridge to women from all over the world, knowing that the power of the image transcends language and cultural barriers. It is an attempt to show ourselves in our differences and to unite us in our similarities: it is a communication proposal.' ■

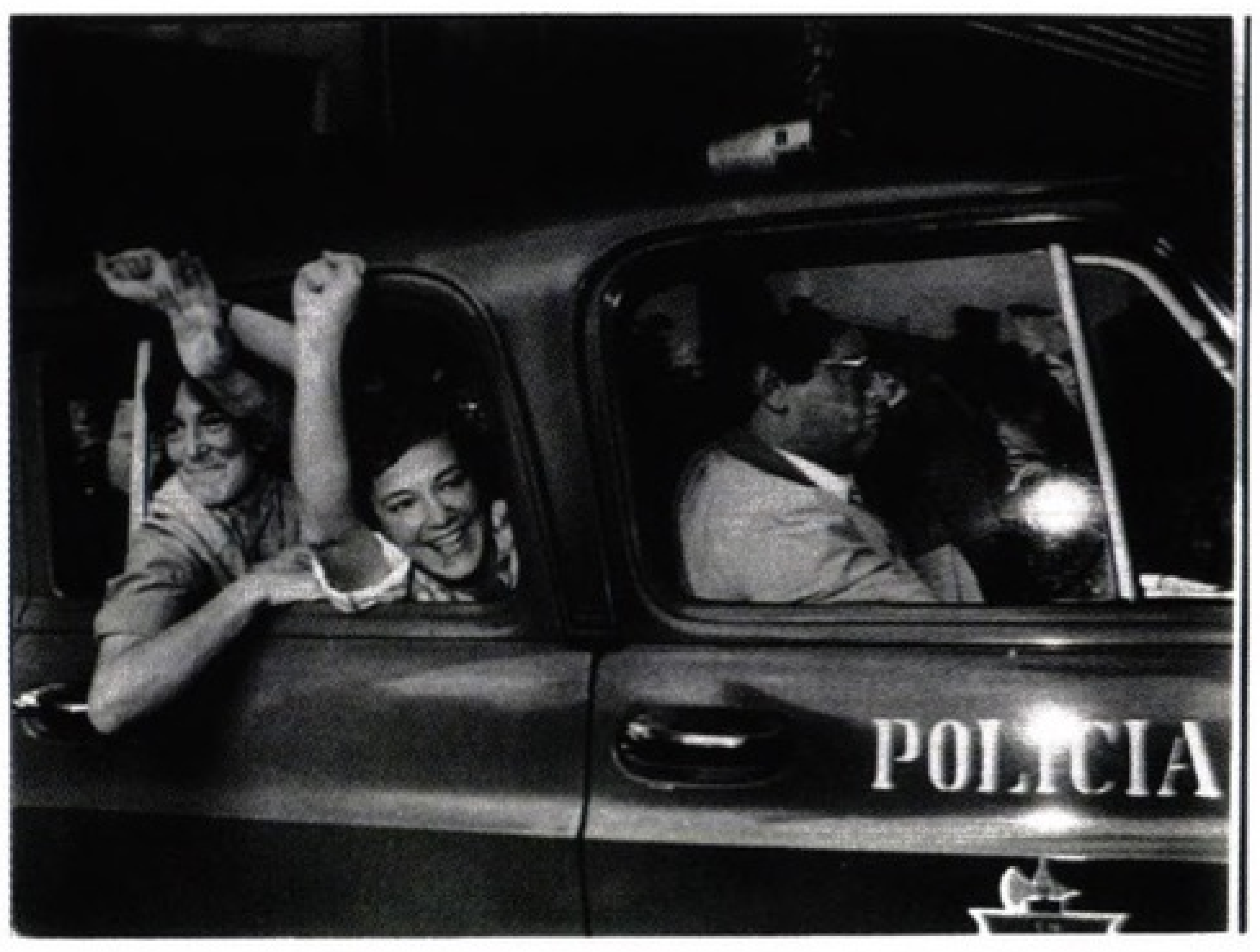
Overleaf: *Madre shipiba* – Mother from the Shipiba indigenous people, who live in the Amazon rainforest near Pucallpa, captured by the Peruvian photographer **Monica Newton.**

'Abro mis ojos a la luz del amor
y de tus labios.'
'I open my eyes to the light of love
and of your lips.'
(Javier Heraud)



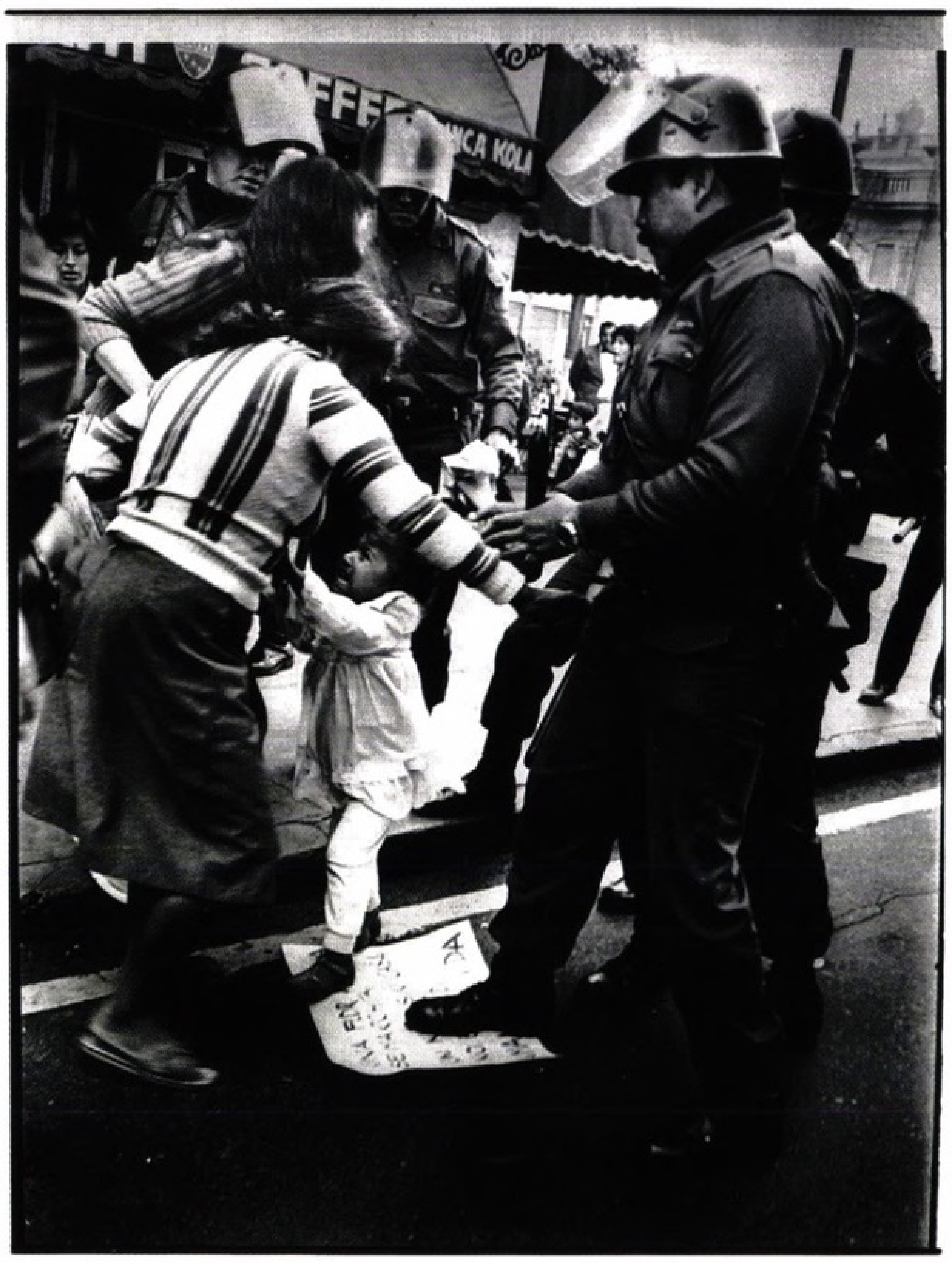
Right: *Liliana* is locked up in Los Harnos Prison in Argentina. **Adriana Lestido** has taken us to visit her.

'...una cara nos mira
desde el fondo de un espejo.'
'... a face looks at us
from the depths of a mirror.'
(Jorge Luis Borges)



Left: *Libres* – Free. When arrest is a victory. Pro-democracy demonstrators' elation caught by **Nancy Urrutia** in Montevideo, Uruguay.

'Cuando se desplome
la alta torre de
silencio.'
'When the high tower
of silence collapses.'
(unattributed)



Right: *Pisando la vida* – Crushing life. These Republican Guards at work in Lima, Peru, were photographed by **Rosita Villafuerte**. The trampled placard reads 'A flower without water withers. A child without a house cannot sustain life.'

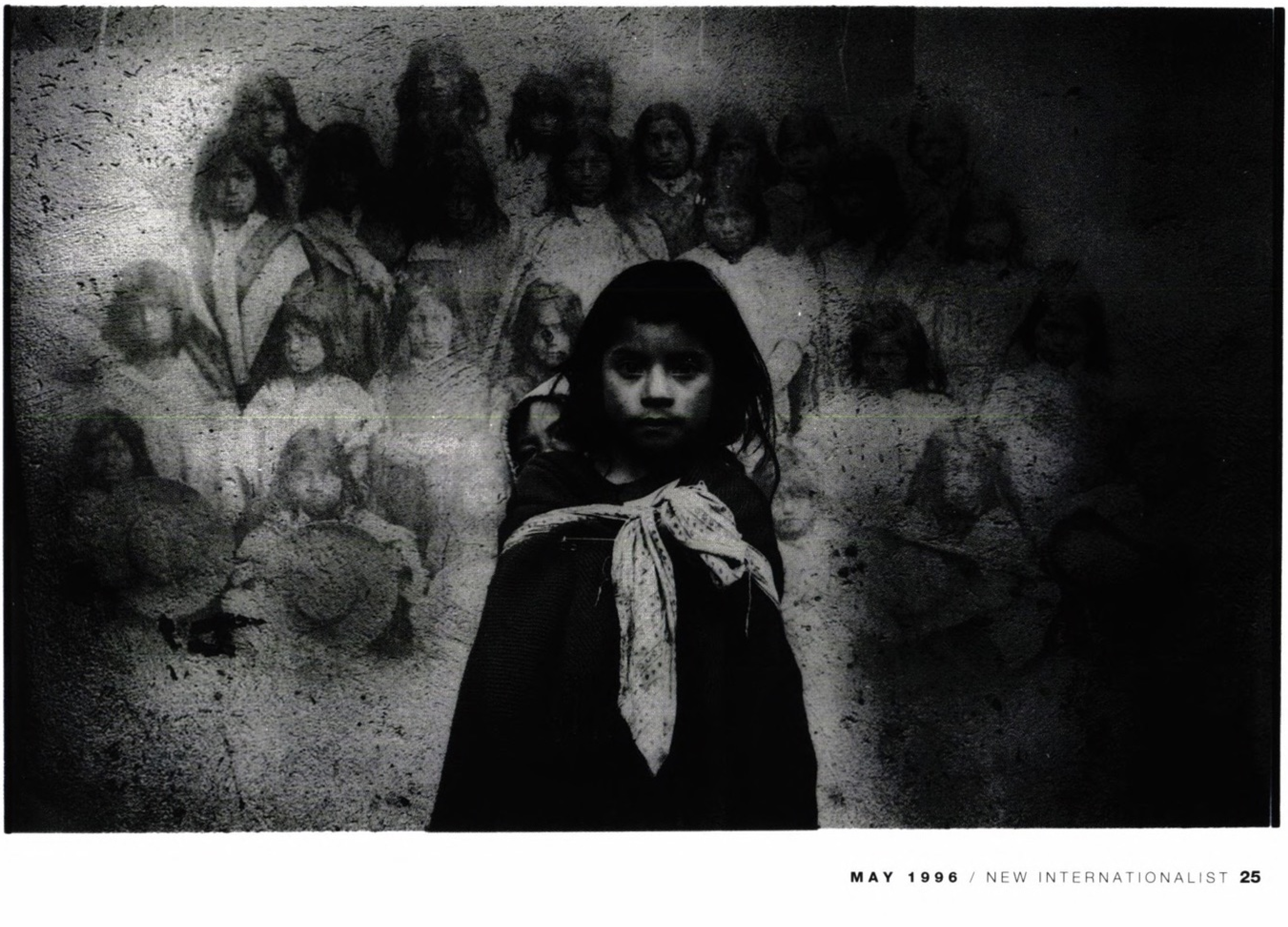
'...suda, mata
y luego canta, almuerza,
se abotona.'

'...sweats, kills
and then sings, eats, and
buttons up.'
(Cesar Vallejo)

Below: *Animas anonimas* – Nameless souls. A creation of the Ecuadorian photographer **Lucia Chiriboga**.

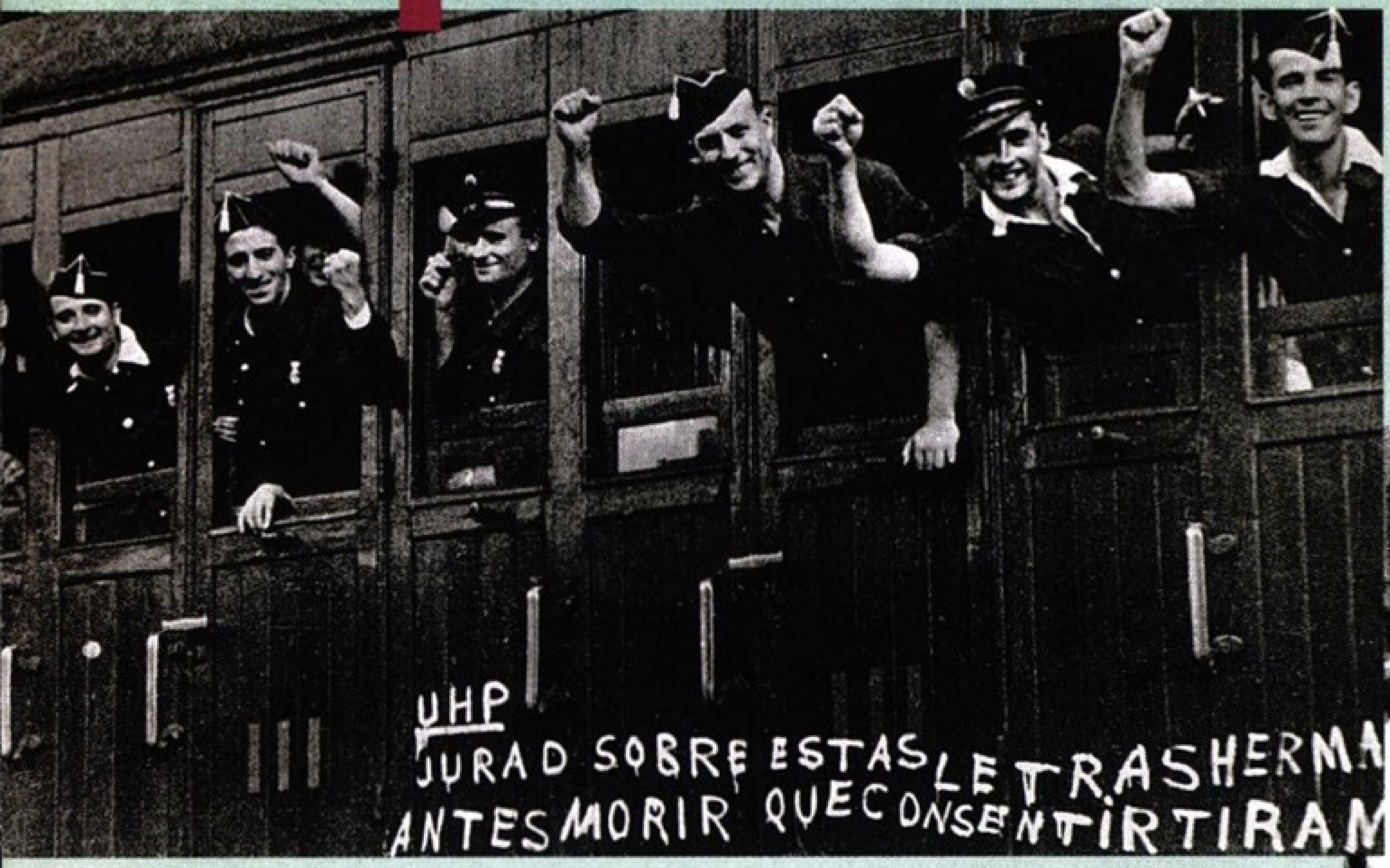
'Y pregunto, pregunto por
mi patria y mi niñez.'

'And I ask, I ask for my country
and my childhood.'
(Washington Delgado)

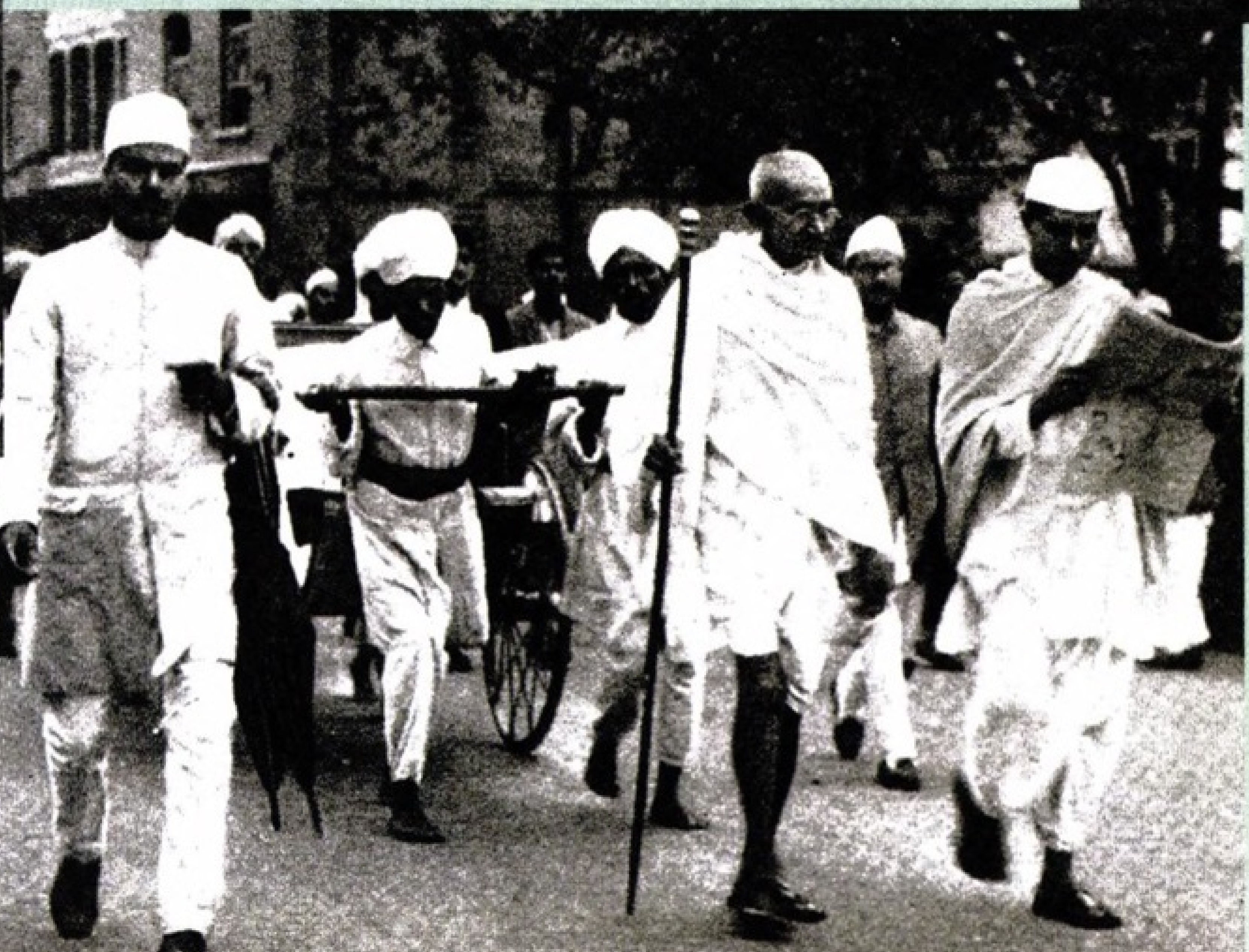


These pictures were supplied by Panos Pictures, who represent TAFOS in Britain.

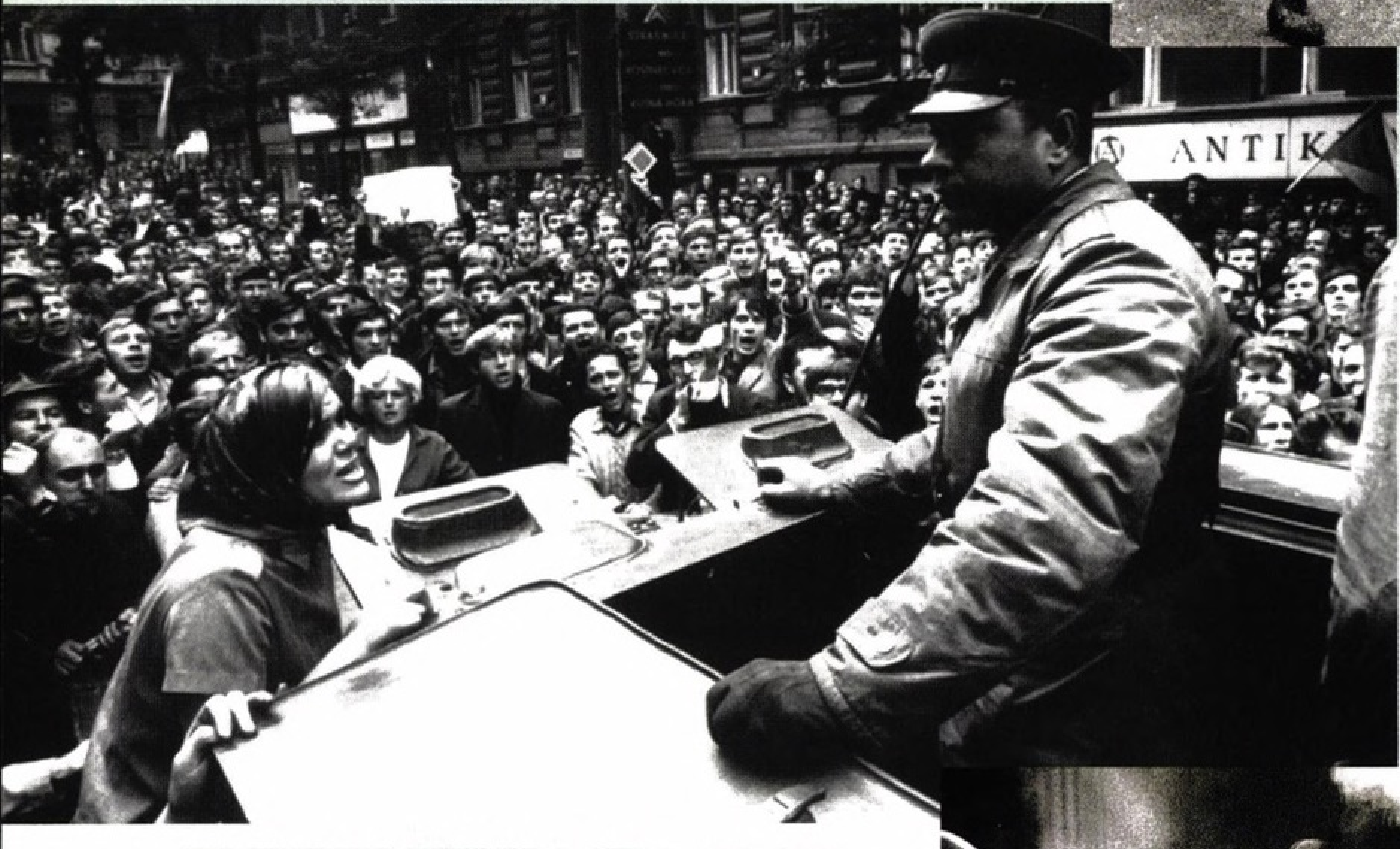
Epochal moments


UHP
JURAD SOBRE ESTAS LETRAS HERMA
ANTES MORIR QUE CONSENTIR TIRAM

DEATH IS PROBABLE BUT RESISTANCE IS CERTAIN. When Franco's fascists provoked the Spanish Civil War in 1936, the Republican cause became an inspirational magnet. Idealistic leftists from all over the world enlisted for the anti-fascist crusade. Here the Union of Proletarian Comrades (UHP) leave Barcelona for the front in August 1936. The painted message reads: 'The UHP swear to accept death rather than the tyranny of Franco.'

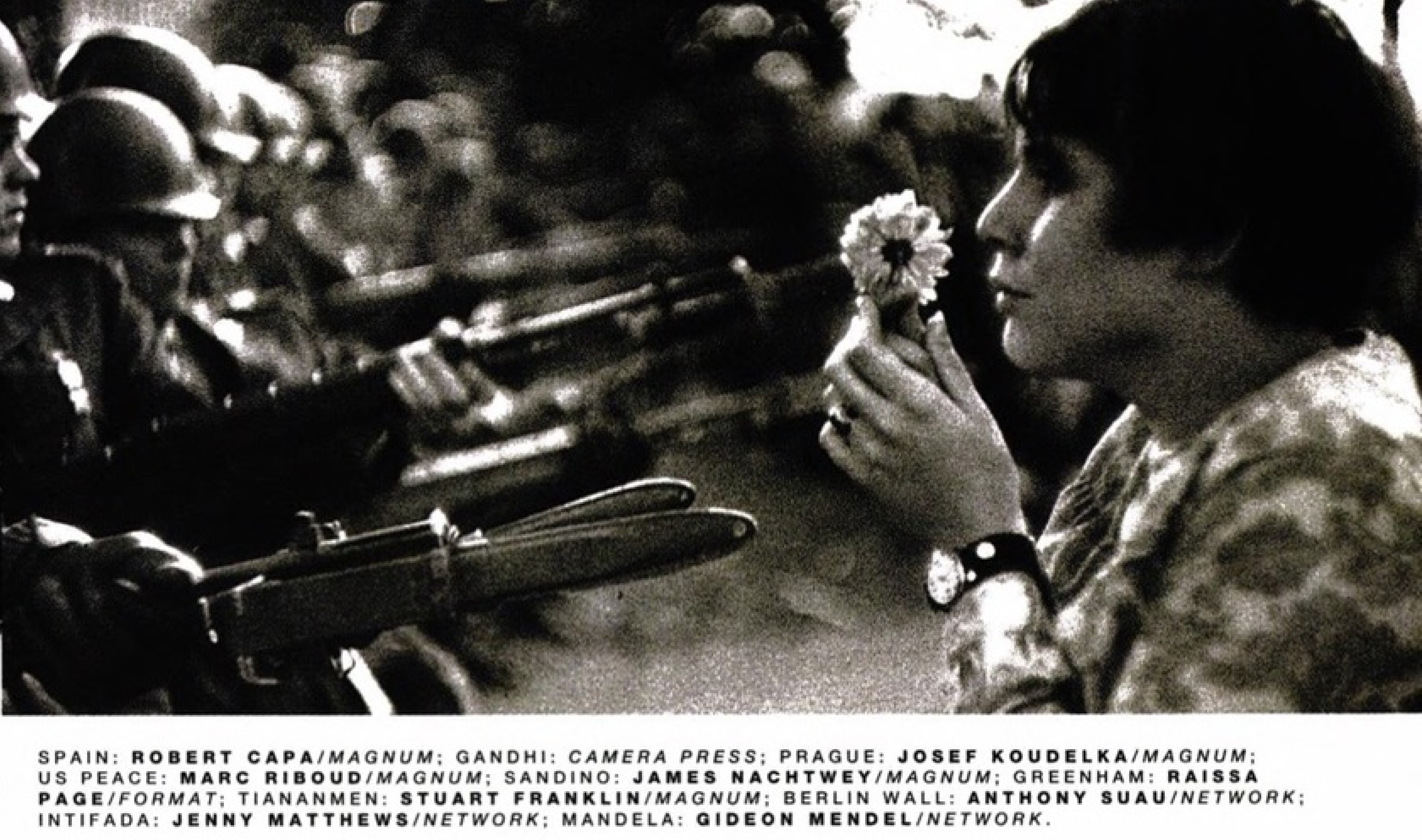


THE PROPHET OF NON-VIOLENCE. The Mahatma, Mohandas Gandhi, en route to the mountain town of Simla to talk with the British Viceroy in 1931. India's case for independence became irresistible largely thanks to Gandhi's imaginative, morally unimpeachable resistance techniques – long marches rather than stone-throwing riots; hunger strikes in which the very frailty of his body became more powerful than an army. 'In non-violence,' he said, 'the masses have a weapon which enables a child, a woman, or even a decrepit old man to resist the mightiest government successfully.'

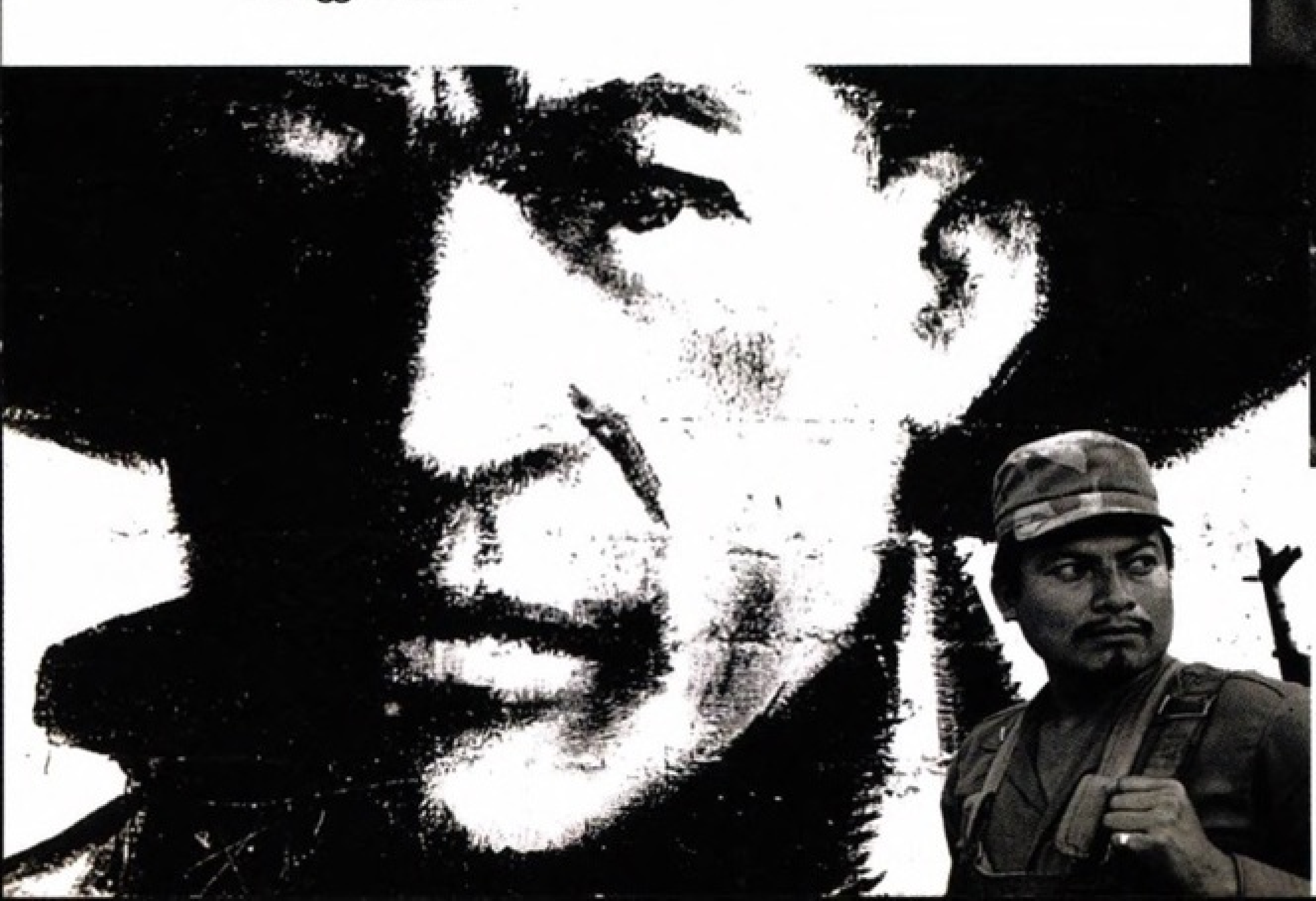


LET MY PEOPLE GO. On 22 August 1968 Soviet tanks rolled in to end the Prague Spring, a period of liberalization in Communist Czechoslovakia. People blocked their path by sheer weight of numbers and pleaded with Russian soldiers as allies. But hardliners were installed and dissent was stifled. Five months later 21-year-old student Jan Palach committed the ultimate act of protest, setting himself on fire. 'My act has fulfilled its purpose,' he said, 'but let nobody else do it'.

FLOWER POWER. US youth revolt in the late 1960s was not only about turning on, tuning in and dropping out. It was also a time of political rebellion rooted in opposition to the war in Vietnam, as at this Washington demonstration. At about the same time US belief in its divine right to military rule was sapped at the other end by North Vietnam's 1968 Tet Offensive.

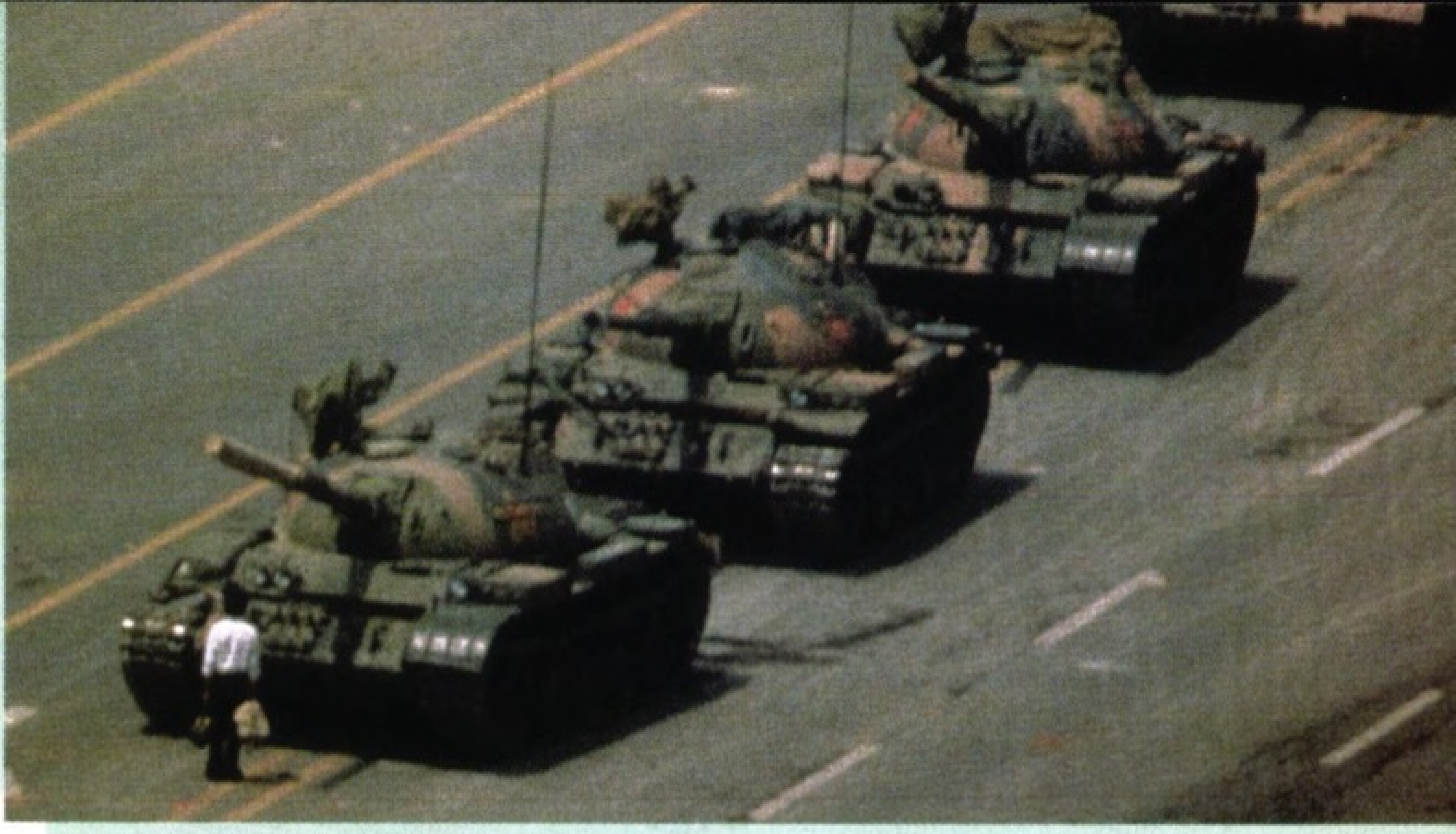


SANDINO SUNRISE. In 1979 Anastasio Somoza, dictator of Nicaragua, was ousted in a revolution. Named after Augusto Cesar Sandino, a rebel from the 1920s (below), the new Sandinista Government's egalitarian programme inspired leftists the world over. In a non-violent echo of the Spanish Civil War internacionalistas flocked to pick coffee and build bridges to sustain the revolution against US aggression.



SPAIN: **ROBERT CAPA**/*MAGNUM*; GANDHI: *CAMERA PRESS*; PRAGUE: **JOSEF KOUDELKA**/*MAGNUM*; US PEACE: **MARC RIBOUD**/*MAGNUM*; SANDINO: **JAMES NACHTWEY**/*MAGNUM*; GREENHAM: **RAISSA PAGE**/*FORMAT*; TIANANMEN: **STUART FRANKLIN**/*MAGNUM*; BERLIN WALL: **ANTHONY SUAU**/*NETWORK*; INTIFADA: **JENNY MATTHEWS**/*NETWORK*; MANDELA: **GIDEON MENDEL**/*NETWORK*.

SISTERS ARE DOING IT FOR THEMSELVES. In the early 1980s a wave of protest against nuclear weapons swept the West. Among the most creative protesters were the women who camped outside the US air base in Greenham Common, England. Their co-operative, feminist ethos did as much to undermine the military agenda as direct actions like this one, when they invaded the base and danced upon a missile silo.



THE REVOLUTION *WILL* BE TELEVISED. In the seminal resistance image of the twentieth century, a lone figure stands firm, blocking the advance of tanks which had just crushed the heady mass protest for democracy in Tiananmen Square. It was May 1989. For days the world had been holding its breath as students got higher and higher on the prospect of freedom. The curtain came down but one day soon the spirit of Tiananmen will lift it again.

AND THE WALLS CAME TUMBLING DOWN. 1989 was a vintage year for resistance which saw popular passion dismantling a fortress that had seemed impregnable for a generation – the one the Soviet Union had built in Eastern Europe. Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia all had non-Communist governments by the year's end; in Romania and Bulgaria hated leaders were deposed. Berliners symbolized the spirit of the year by demolishing the wall that had stood between East and West since 1961.

INTIFADA! Israel emerged from wars with neighbouring Arab countries in 1967 and 1974 both larger and stronger. And it dealt ruthlessly with the attacks of the Palestine Liberation Organization. But internal resistance achieved what external force could not. A mass campaign of civil disobedience in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza in the late 1980s and early 1990s finally forced the Israeli Government to concede to Palestinians a measure of self-rule.

FREE MANDELA. Nelson Mandela's release in February 1990 after 26 years in prison was not just a triumph for the black people of South Africa. It was also a defining moment for sympathizers all over the world who had campaigned against the apartheid regime.

The 1990s began in hope. But sadly the new world order still needs challenging. The activists of today can draw inspiration from yesterday's rich heritage of resistance.

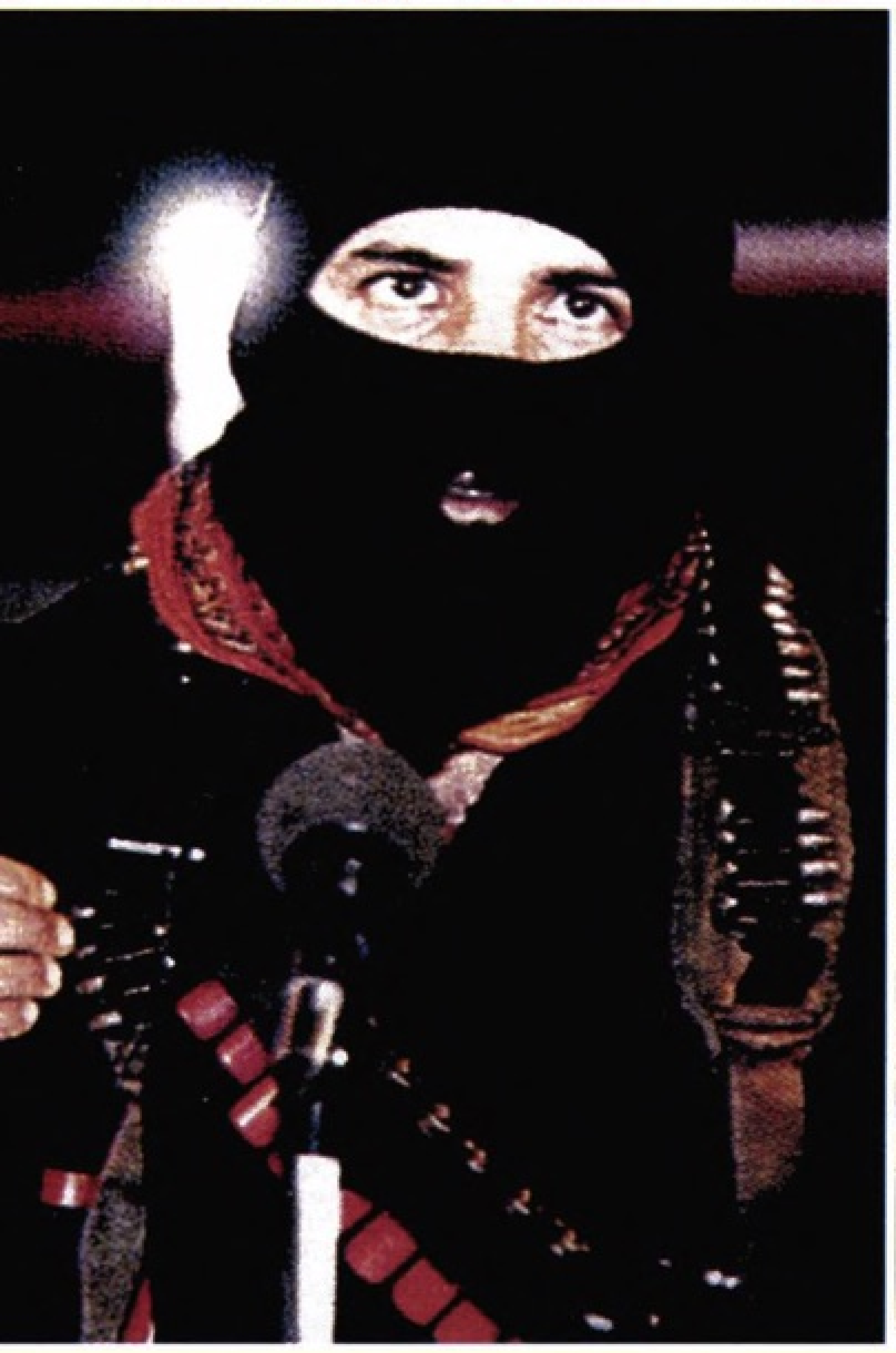
¡Zapatistas!

ON NEW YEAR'S DAY 1994 the world was taken by surprise when a group of indigenous people staged a rebellion against the Mexican state. The Zapatista Front of National Liberation (FZLN) invoked the name of legendary revolutionary Emiliano Zapata but had a sophisticated and thoroughly modern agenda. They not only stood for the indigenous people of the southern state of Chiapas, so long neglected by corrupt rulers in Mexico City. They also spoke out against Mexico's accession on that New Year's Day to the North American Free Trade Agreement. Mexico's rulers sent in the Army. But instead of being crushed, the Zapatistas have gone from strength to strength, maturing as a political movement, participating in a broad leftist alliance and using sophisticated electronic means of communicating with the wider world. Their leader Subcomandante Marcos discourages a personality cult but he is a charismatic figure, as inclined to burst into idealistic poetry as he is to launch a political initiative. *'The crash of these two winds will be born, its time has arrived, it has stoked the fire of history. Now the wind from above rules, but here comes the wind from below, here comes the storm... that is how it will be... When the storm calms, when rain and fire again leave the country in peace, the world will no longer be the world but something better.'*

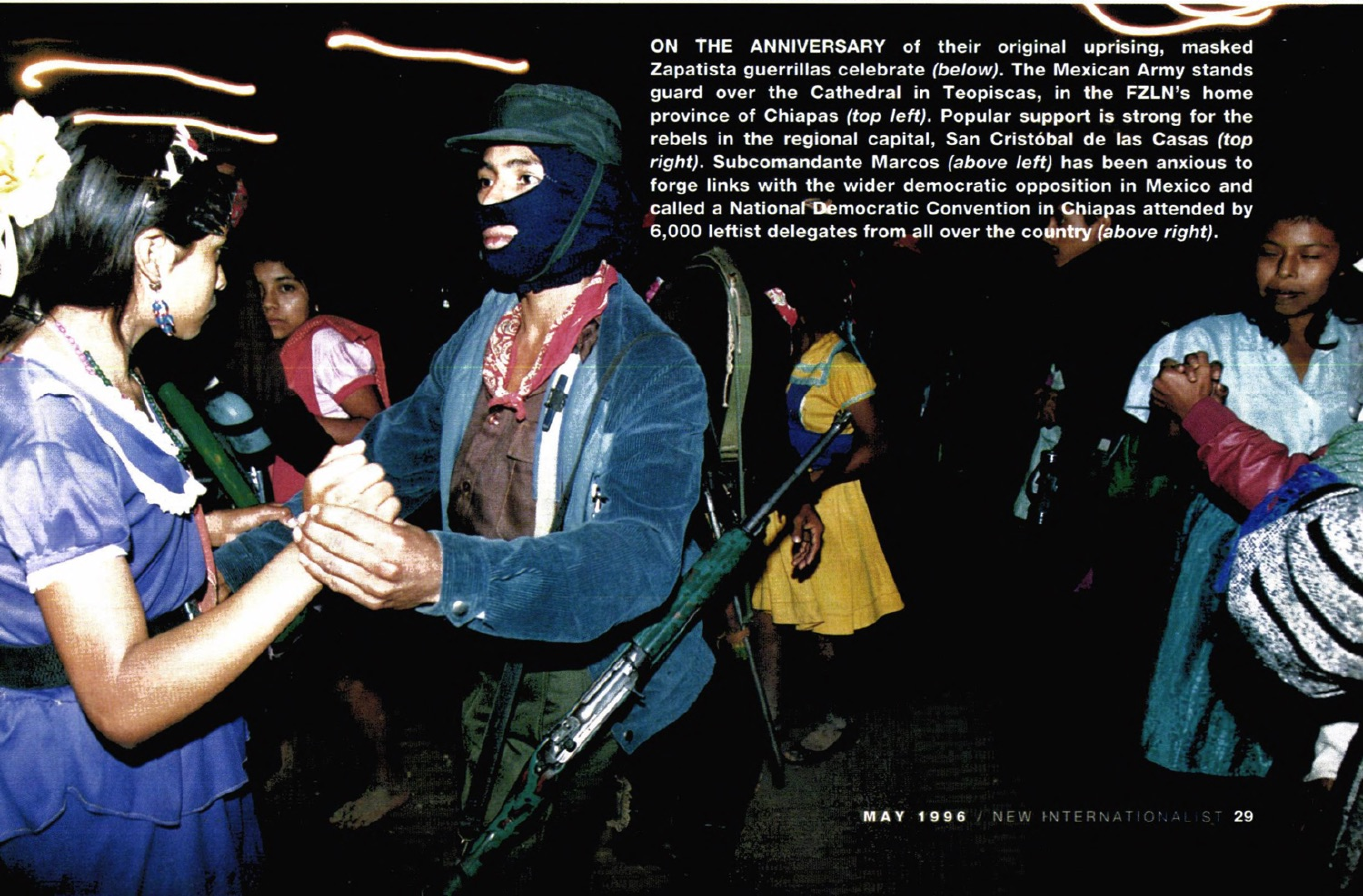
VOGUE
PARIS
NEW YORK

THIS PAGE: ABBAS / MAGNUM. FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: STEPHEN FERRY / GAMMA/FRANK SPOONER; DAHER / GAMMA/FRANK SPOONER; ABBAS / MAGNUM; STEPHEN FERRY / GAMMA/FRANK SPOONER; SALABER / LIAISON/FRANK SPOONER.

Coca-Cola
VIVA
EZL



ON THE ANNIVERSARY of their original uprising, masked Zapatista guerrillas celebrate *(below)*. The Mexican Army stands guard over the Cathedral in Teopiscas, in the FZLN's home province of Chiapas *(top left)*. Popular support is strong for the rebels in the regional capital, San Cristóbal de las Casas *(top right)*. Subcomandante Marcos *(above left)* has been anxious to forge links with the wider democratic opposition in Mexico and called a National Democratic Convention in Chiapas attended by 6,000 leftist delegates from all over the country *(above right)*.



ACTION

ROADS/FORESTS

AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

Greenpeace Private Bag 92507, Auckland. Tel: (09) 630 6317. Fax: (09) 630 7121. Greenpeace has an Auckland-based forestry campaigner.

Wellington Rainforest Action Group and **Campaign for a Better City** are both at PO Box 11-964, Wellington. Tel: (04) 385 6728.

Friends of the Earth PO Box 5599, Auckland. Tel: (09) 303 4319.

AUSTRALIA

Opposition to urban freeways is best contacted via Greenpeace. The following groups are all active on deforestation and mining issues.

Greenpeace PO Box 800, Surry Hills, NSW 2010. Tel: (02) 211 4066. Fax: (02) 211 4123.

Friends of the Earth 134 Broadway, NSW 2007. Tel: (02) 281 4070.

The Wilderness Society 130 Davey Street, Hobart, Tasmania 7000. Freecall: 1800 030641.

Australian Conservation Foundation 340 Gore Street, Fitzroy, VIC 3065. Tel: (03) 416 1166.

BRITAIN

Alarm UK 13 Stockwell Road, London SW9 9AU. Tel: (0171) 737 6641. Network for over 100 community anti-roads groups nationwide.

Road Alert PO Box 5544, Newbury RG14 5FB. Tel: (01635) 521770. Co-ordinates anti-roads protest; direct-action arm of Alarm UK.

Reclaim the Streets Battlebridge Centre, Battlebridge Road, Kings Cross, London NW1. Tel: (0171) 713 5874. Organizes illegal street closures.

BREATHE EASY
R.I.P.

JENNY MATTHEWS / NETWORK

Greenpeace Greenpeace House, Canonbury Villas, London N1 2PN. Tel: (0171) 354 5100. Fax: (0171) 359 4372.

Friends of the Earth 26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ. Tel: (0171) 490 1555. Fax: (0171) 490 0881.

Earth First! See Non-Violent Direct Action.

CANADA

Greenpeace 185 Spadina Avenue, 6th Floor, Toronto, ON M5T 2C6. Tel: (416) 597 8408. Fax: (416) 597 8422.

Friends of the Earth 251 Laurier Avenue West, Suite 701, Ottawa, ON K1P 5J6. Tel: (613) 230 3352. Fax: (613) 232 4354.

Cultural Survival Canada 200 Isabella Street, Suite 304, Ottawa, ON K1S 1V7. Tel: (613) 237 5361. Fax: (613) 257 1547.

Friends of Clayoquot Sound See under Non-Violent Direct Action.

UNITED STATES

Greenpeace 1436 U St W, Washington, DC 20009. Tel: (202) 462 1177. Fax: (202) 462 4507.

Friends of the Earth 1025 Vermont Ave NW, 3rd Floor, Washington, DC 20005. Tel: (202) 783 7400. Fax: (202) 783 0444.

Earth First! c/o Earth First Journal, PO Box 1415, Eugene, OR 97440. Tel: (503) 741 9191. Fax: (503) 741 9192.

Cultural Survival 46 Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA 02138. Tel: (617) 441 5400. Fax: 441 5417.

Rainforest Action Network 450 Sansome Street, No 700, San Francisco, CA 94105. Tel: (415) 398 4404. Fax: (415) 398 2732.

NON-VIOLENT DIRECT ACTION

AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

Auckland Unemployed Workers Rights Centre (AUWRC) PO Box 3813, Auckland. Tel: (09) 302 2496. Fax: (09) 377 4804. Organizes direct-action protests against the Government and others whose policies harm the unemployed.

Kotare Research and Education for Social Change Trust PO Box 3813, Auckland. Tel: (09) 302 2496. Fax: (09) 302 4804. Provides education for activists and community workers including non-violent direct action techniques.

Wellington People's Centre PO Box 9491, Te Aro, Wellington. Tel: (04) 385 8596.

Anti-Bases Campaign c/o Warren Thompson, PO Box 2258, Christchurch. Tel: (03) 337 3465. Direct action against bases with foreign links.

BRITAIN

Earth First! Dept 29, 1 Newton Street, Piccadilly, Manchester M1 1HW. Autonomous direct-action collectives, active on roads, opencast mining etc.

Freedom Network Tel: (0171) 582 3474. Action line: (0171) 793 7343. Info on NVDA events.

CANADA

Friends of Clayoquot Sound PO Box 489, Tofino, BC V0R 2Z0. Tel: (604) 725 4218. Fax: (604) 725 2527. Using non-violent direct action and information to combat destruction of the ancient forests of Vancouver Island.

Ontario Coalition for Non-violent Action c/o Toronto Action for Social Change, PO Box 3620, 509 St Clair Ave W, Toronto, ON M6C 1C0. Tel: (416) 651 5800.

UNITED STATES

War Resister League 339 Lafayette Street, New York, NY 10012. Tel: (212) 228 0450. Fax: (212) 228 6193.

Fellowship of Reconciliation Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960. Tel: (914) 358 4601. Fax: 358 4924.

ZAPATISTA SOLIDARITY

AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

Wellington Latin America Group c/o Paul Bruce. Tel: (04) 389 8699. E-mail: paul@ebruce.wgtn.planet.co.nz

Voces Latinas, Guadalupe Rosales/Maritza Leon, Radio Plains FM96.9. PO Box 22-297 Christchurch.

AUSTRALIA

La Peña 1 Bedford Street, Newtown, NSW 2042. Tel: (02) 519 4874.

JULIO ETCHART / REPORTAGE

Libertad al

JULIO ETCHART / REPORTAGE

BRITAIN

Mexico Support Group Casa Latinamericana, Kingsgate Place, Kilburn, London NW6 4TA. Tel: (0171) 328 2865.

CANADA

Mexico Solidarity Network c/o Mark Xuereb, 91 King Street N, Ste 89, Waterloo, ON N2J 2X3. Tel: (519) 746 4090. Fax: (519) 746 4096.

UNITED STATES

National Commission for Democracy in Mexico 601 North Cotton Street, No A103, El Paso, TX 79902. Tel/Fax: (912) 532 8382.

Tonatierra, Indigenous Peoples Alliance PO Box 24009, Phoenix, AZ 85074. Tel: (602) 254 5230. Fax: (602) 252 6094.

South and Meso American Indian Rights Center PO Box 28703, Oakland, CA 94604. Tel: (510) 834 4268. Fax: (510) 834 4264.

BANGLADESH SOLIDARITY

Bangladesh solidarity groups overseas tend to be aligned to the two main political parties. Groups monitoring human-rights abuses are therefore the most obvious points of contact – Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

WORTH READING/VIEWING

Ya Basta! a Zapatista Solidarity Website, is well worth a look, containing the latest news on Zapatista actions, the full text of their communiqués and some excellent photos. Find it on: **http://www.peak.org/~justin/ezln/ezln.ht**

Another website worth investigating is **http://www.phreak.co.uk/squall/** This is the homepage of **Squall**, an excellent quarterly magazine bulging with resistance news, action ideas and contact points. It is fast becoming biblical for alternative activists in Britain. Reach it at: PO Box 8959, London N19 5HW, UK. Tel: +44 (0)171 561 1204. e-mail: squall@phreak.intermedia.co.uk

Undercurrents is a non-profit group producing alternative news videos. Each new quarterly edition showcases stories shot by activists on their own camcorders. It is British-based but increasingly international in outlook: *Undercurrents 4* includes an innovative TV ad about economic growth by Canadian outfit Adbusters and a piece on Shell's devastation of Ogoniland; as well as a glimpse of the miners' action in a minister's back garden mentioned on page 7 (though unfortunately not his lavender pyjamas). *Undercurrents 5* is imminent. The group also co-ordinates a camcorder action network. They are at Box 30, 16b Cherwell Street, Oxford OX4 1BG, UK. Tel: +44 (0)1865 203662. E-mail: underc@gn.apc.org

George McKay's **Senseless Acts of Beauty** is newly published by Verso. This intriguing analysis of current direct-action-related movements – free festivals and New Age travellers as well as eco-radicals – aims to show the roots of such alternative action reaching back through punk anarchism to the hippie counterculture of Theodore Roszak and beyond. It is in the Establishment's interest for cultural revolts to be dismissed as ineffectual by succeeding generations. As was true for feminists, uncovering roots is all-important – it helps today's activists not to feel isolated, to draw heart and strength from previous generations' resistance.

The **NI** Interview

Sandra Ramos

Many women who supported the Sandinistas in Nicaragua have had enough of burying their own demands for the sake of the revolution. **Sandra Ramos** tells **Richard Swift** what they are doing about it.

Sandra Ramos doesn't strike one at first as a likely leader of Nicaragua's foremost feminist organization. Sure she looks street-wise in her black leather jacket. But she giggles disarmingly when I ask if it's okay to take her picture in the course of our interview, and leans down to put on her lipstick. She tries to straighten her dark-brown, curly hair which flies off every which way.

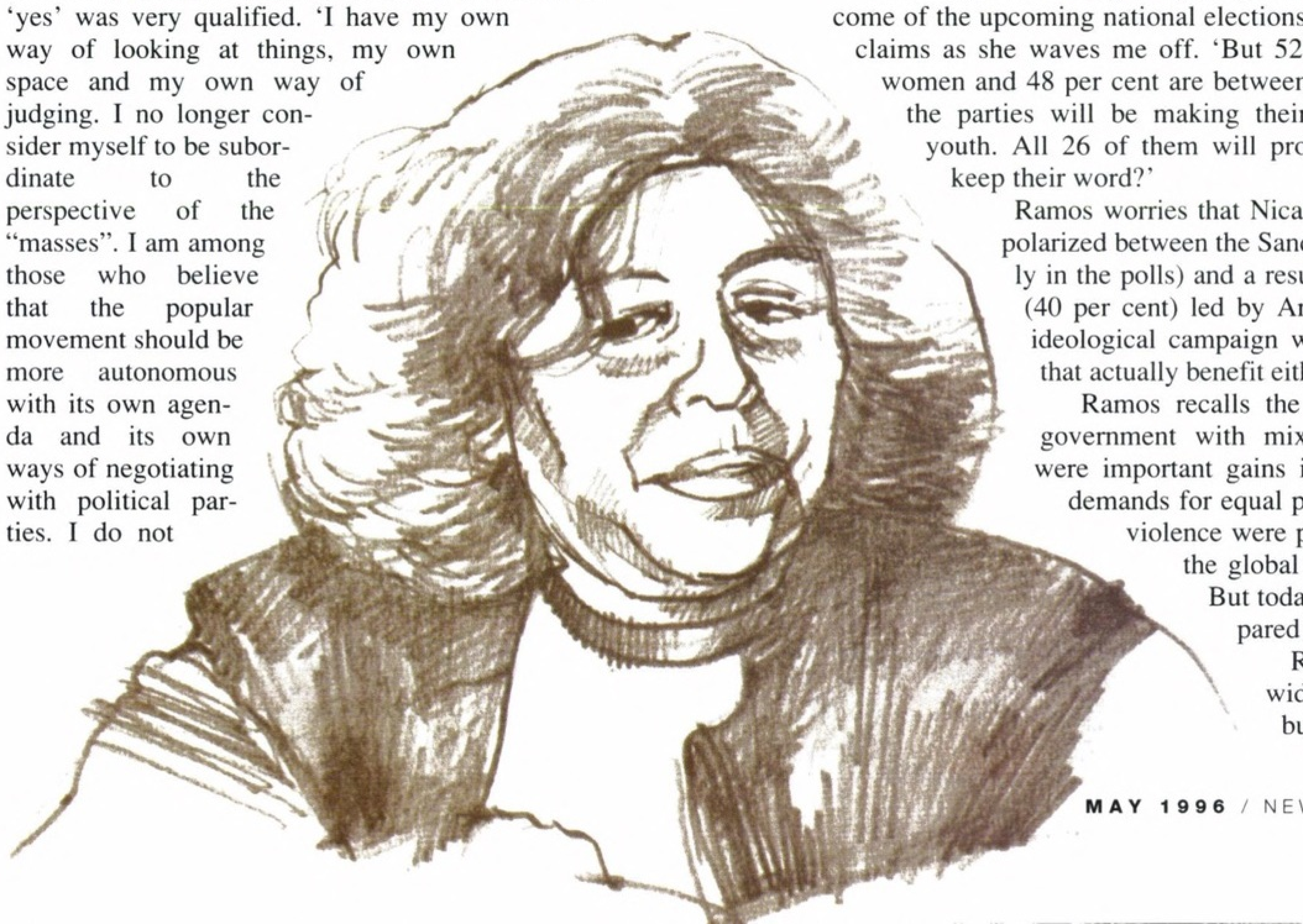
But appearances can be misleading. And my North American cultural prejudices quickly melt away. When she starts to talk in rapid-fire Spanish there is little doubt that Ramos is a formidable spokesperson for the rights of Nicaragua's women. She is currently the National Co-ordinator of the Movement of Working and Unemployed Women. The movement has 7,000 members, 12 paid staff and runs vocational training programs, a women's leadership program and a legal-aid office.

Ramos earned her spurs as a Sandinista activist in the 1980s but gradually became disillusioned with the male-dominated Sandinista Party and particularly its associated trade union the CST. 'We got to a certain point where the issues that were important to us as women were not the issues being taken up by the male leadership. Our proposals got no air time and the candidates we put forward for leadership never got selected. The male leadership of the CST were quite afraid of the emerging leadership of women, afraid to be displaced by us. We decided to set up our own movement.'

The issues that were important to us as women were not the issues being taken up by the male leadership

Here Ramos can barely disguise her lingering anger. 'Two days after that there were arrest orders issued for us and for a year we were trying to get away from the police. They said that we had stolen their money and taken over a housing project that did not yet exist. They couldn't debate with us politically so they decided to use force.'

I was curious as to whether, after this experience, Ramos still identified herself with the Sandinista movement. Her 'yes' was very qualified. 'I have my own way of looking at things, my own space and my own way of judging. I no longer consider myself to be subordinate to the perspective of the "masses". I am among those who believe that the popular movement should be more autonomous with its own agenda and its own ways of negotiating with political parties. I do not believe that the social movement should be subordinate to political parties. We are looking for other ways to achieve political power.'



Ramos sees the everyday effects of the neo-liberal model that is being imposed on a post-Sandinista Nicaragua as the central issue for the new autonomous women's movement. 'Some 70 per cent of the labour force is unemployed. So jobs and the right to healthcare and education are the basic demands for women. Neo-liberalism is working towards the privatization of healthcare and education, and also to reduce the number of jobs required to produce goods.

'The Government's only alternative in terms of jobs is to go work in the *maquilas* (export-only factories). This strategy is based on the poorly paid labour of women workers. There are 20 international companies investing here – mostly Korean and Taiwanese – all producing for the North American market. The women who work here have no benefits and are entirely outside the normal labour-law requirements. Women earn an average of $70 a month – less than a third of what they need to survive. They work 10 to 15 hours a day. We are organizing women in the *maquilas*. We are hiring a lawyer full-time to deal with women's cases. We are making links with the Asian workers from where these investments come.'

But any change in *maquila* labour conditions must come from political influence on the national scene. Here Ramos is encouraged by the gains of Nicaragua's autonomous women's movement. 'It has set in motion a process around the November election to negotiate with all women politicians, no matter what party. We will start up a campaign office to support all women politicians who will support our basic demands. Even right-wing women will oppose violence against women, and support daycare.'

Ramos gives a hearty belly laugh when I ask her about the outcome of the upcoming national elections. 'I am no clairvoyant,' she claims as she waves me off. 'But 52 per cent of the voters are women and 48 per cent are between the ages of 16 and 19. So the parties will be making their promises to women and youth. All 26 of them will promise. But how many will keep their word?'

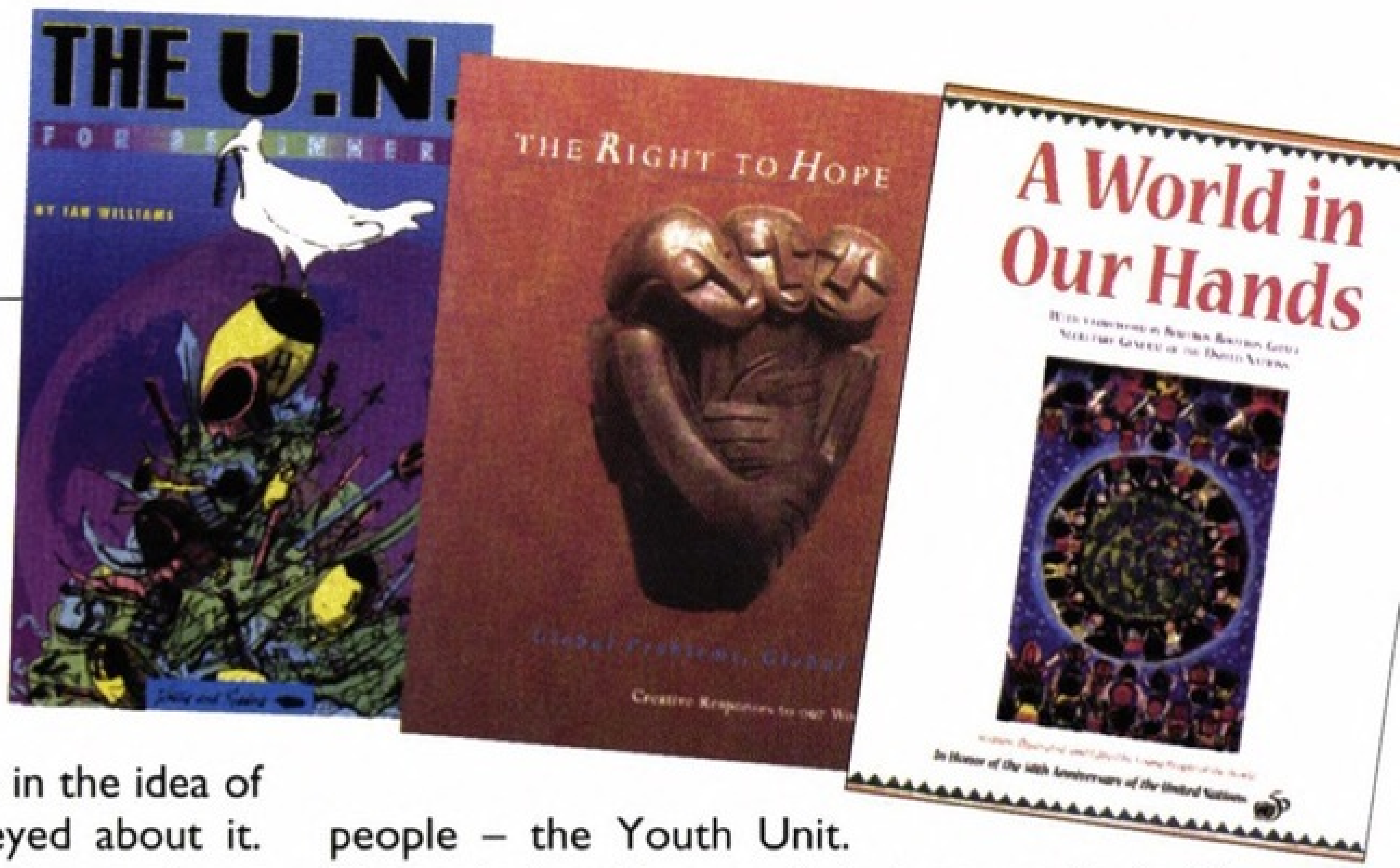
Ramos worries that Nicaraguan politics will become polarized between the Sandinistas (20 per cent currently in the polls) and a resurgent Somocista right wing (40 per cent) led by Arnoldo Aleman in 'a highly ideological campaign with few concrete proposals that actually benefit either women or youth'.

Ramos recalls the heady days of Sandinista government with mixed feelings. 'While there were important gains in social welfare, women's demands for equal pay, equal rights and against violence were put on hold, subordinated to the global demands of the revolution. But today women are no longer prepared to tolerate this.'

Ramos' face breaks into a wide grin: 'I'm really sorry, but it is our turn.' ■

ILLUSTRATION BY ALAN HUGHES

Reviews



books

The UN for Beginners

by **Ian Williams**

(Writers and Readers, ISBN 0-86316-185-5)

The World in Our Hands

written, illustrated and edited by the **Young People of the World**

(Tricycle Press, ISBN 1-883672-31-7)

The Right to Hope

edited by **Catherine Thick**

(Earthscan ISBN 1-85383-309-6)

One thing about Ian Williams is immediately apparent – he's no UN groupie. His **UN for Beginners** is sharp, scabrous, witty and critical. He gets off to a no-punches-pulled start with: 'The UN has the media relations of a 1950s state bureaucracy. It doesn't like reporters looking into its inner workings, and it threatens dire penalties to staff found leaking information. Time and again, when journalists have exposed scandals in the UN, senior officials have set up an inquiry – into who leaked!'

The fast-paced text, documentary-comic design, imaginatively treated photos and wicked cartoons make this an inspired and incisive rattle through a subject that has every potential for being about as exciting as ditch-water. It's packed with quotes, anecdotes, insider insights and flashes of humour ('ethically challenged' is how Williams describes ex-Secretary General Kurt Waldheim). But Williams is not a hard-bitten cynic through and through. He believes in the idea of the UN – he's just not starry-eyed about it. And he is capable of delivering bouquets as well as brickbats. Summing up, he says: 'The UN has survived liars and astrologers as Secretaries General. It's taken the rap for the dirty deeds that the Super Powers have wished on it. It's been the scapegoat of nation-states great and small. But if it didn't exist we'd have to invent something like it. And if it were re-invented it would probably not look too different from now by the time the governments of the world have had their way.'

He wants us, his readers, to take an interest in how our UN representative votes and behaves. 'Show them they are being watched. Write and shout. If they make deals in smoke-filled rooms, let them know that you'll roast them afterwards... It's your United Nations. It says so in the charter. Rescue it from the gray men in gray suits.' This book certainly provides the stimulus to kick ass where it's needed.

Politics ☆☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆☆

The World in Our Hands is a somewhat gentler experience. But it has its sharp edges too. When the kids who put it together got started on this project they discovered that there was already a UN agency for young people – the Youth Unit.
The only trouble was it had no youth in it! This book reverses the information flow – it has been written, edited and illustrated by young people aged 12 to 21 from around the world. As its (45!) editors say: 'Most of the information we get about our world and its Big Issues comes from adults... That's why we decided that we, the young people, should speak out about our future since we are the ones who'll actually be living it.' Colourful and controversial, this book will be useful in classrooms and development education centres.

Politics ☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆

An equally interesting, though more high-brow project, is **The Right to Hope**. Editor Catherine Thick has brought together the work and thoughts of artists, thinkers, leaders, scholars and activists from around the globe who are, each in their own way, dedicated to trying to create a better world. It's a big visionary project, with written contributions from the likes of Vandana Shiva, Desmond Tutu, Wangari Maathai and Susan George. A book to savour in those quieter, thoughtful moments.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆ VB

music

Night Songs

by **Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan** and **Michael Brook** *(Virgin/Real World LC 3098 CD)*

At first glance, such a pairing may seem unlikely: Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Pakistan's *qawwali* superstar with Canadian guitarist and electronics wizard, Michael Brook. *Qawwali* – that is, Islamic Sufi devotional song – is a particular form of music which exists for one purpose only: to engender an ecstatic union with God. Outside collaboration might seem inappropriate. Not so, thankfully. Khan's belief that many types of music have the capacity to approach ecstasy has allowed his *qawwali* fruitful contact with other forms. And Khan has established himself as an enthusiastic musical collaborator of truly exciting mettle; his contributions to the soundtrack for the recent movie, *Dead Man Walking*, are already bringing in a wider audience.

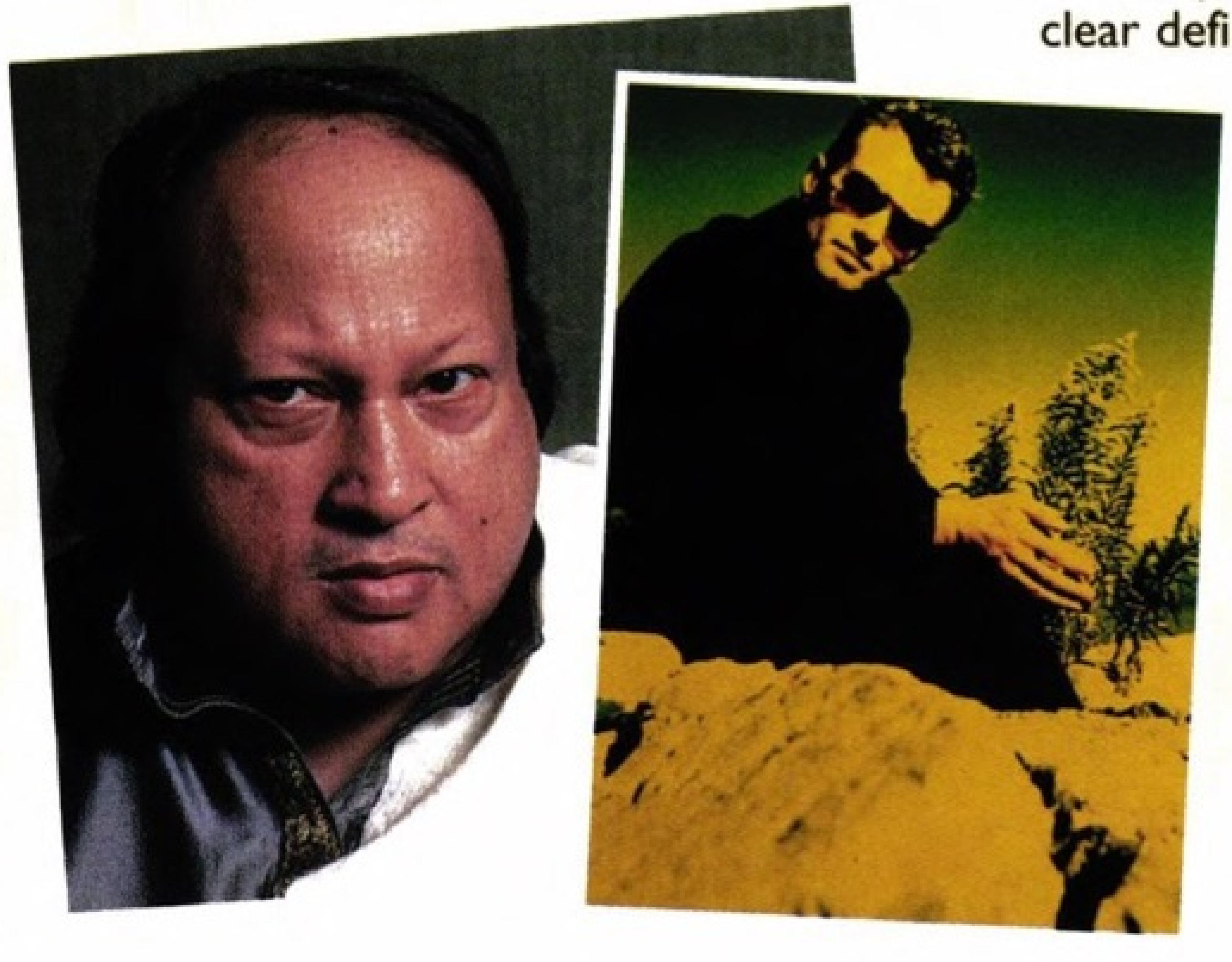
Brook, too, is an expert in his field. Whether he is on his own or part of a collaborative team, his music is always exhilarating, and his clouds of gently treated and electronically warped guitars have graced records by a wide range of artists.

Night Songs is not the first time Khan and Brook have worked together. Six years ago the Canadian produced Khan's previous Real World album, *Mustt Mustt*. It was a pleasant enough recording but it was clear that Brook was only just getting to grips with the fluid undulations of Khan's style. There are no such hitches on **Night Songs**. This is a strange and wonderful album: eight tracks of luminous textures – half eastern, half western – over which presides Khan's far-ranging vocals. With Brook providing a backdrop of tremendous airy expanse, Khan takes on the responsibility of generating not just melody, but rhythm also. The instrumentations are suitably diverse: standard *tabla*, harmonium and guitars being augmented in various places by cello, woodwinds and clubby bass.

There are, amidst passages of astonishing beauty, some scratchy, darker shades which provide contrast. The results range from clipped grooves to passionately intense crescendos. No translations are provided for Khan's lyrics, but in truth they're not needed. It's clear that whatever he's singing about, they are hymns of praise. So too is Brook's contribution. There's always a feeling of mysterious presence in his work.

To pin down Brook and Khan to some clear definition would be to detract from the qualities of their music – dramatic, emotional and transcendent. **Night Songs** is an album that typifies all that is best and sensitive about cross-cultural collaborations. No individual tradition is lost in the merger; rather facets are enhanced and similarities sought out in a manner which can only enrich the imagination. Marvellous.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆ LG



film

The Most Terrible Time In My Life

directed by **Kaizo Hayashi**

A man scuttles into a cinema where the Hollywood classic melodrama *The Best Years of Our Lives* is playing. But he has no intention of going to the film. His custom is with private eye Maiku (Mike) Hamma who runs his business in an office next door to the cinema's rattling projection booth. A sly homage to the hard-boiled detective genre of Mickey Spillane or Raymond Chandler, this film takes the format and runs with it.

But Hamma is far from the bruised hero of his namesake, Hammer. For starters he's fresh-faced and young enough to remember playing cops and robbers, while he patrols the mean streets of Yokohama so that he can save up to send his kid sister to college. Plus it's rather hard to exude cool machismo when said sister is inclined to put him in his place with a playful whack or two. However, Hamma gets himself into a less than playful situation when he takes on the case of finding a Taiwanese waiter's long-lost brother only to become embroiled in a vicious gang war between Japanese and Chinese clans.

Director Hayashi is very much of the Japanese new wave. Shot in black-and-white and with a nifty beat soundtrack, **The Most Terrible Time of My Life** could well have been minted in the late 1950s, except that it now comes with the requisite ironical twists on conventions, whether those of the American *film noir* or home-grown *yazuka* flic. But it is rather kitsch for kitsch's sake. At the end of the film there is a colour-saturated trailer for the next Mike Hamma adventure. Two more are promised. One is good enough.

Politics ☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆ LF

STAR RATING

Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

Reviews by **Lizzie Francke, Louise Gray** and **Vanessa Baird**
Reviews editor: **Vanessa Baird**

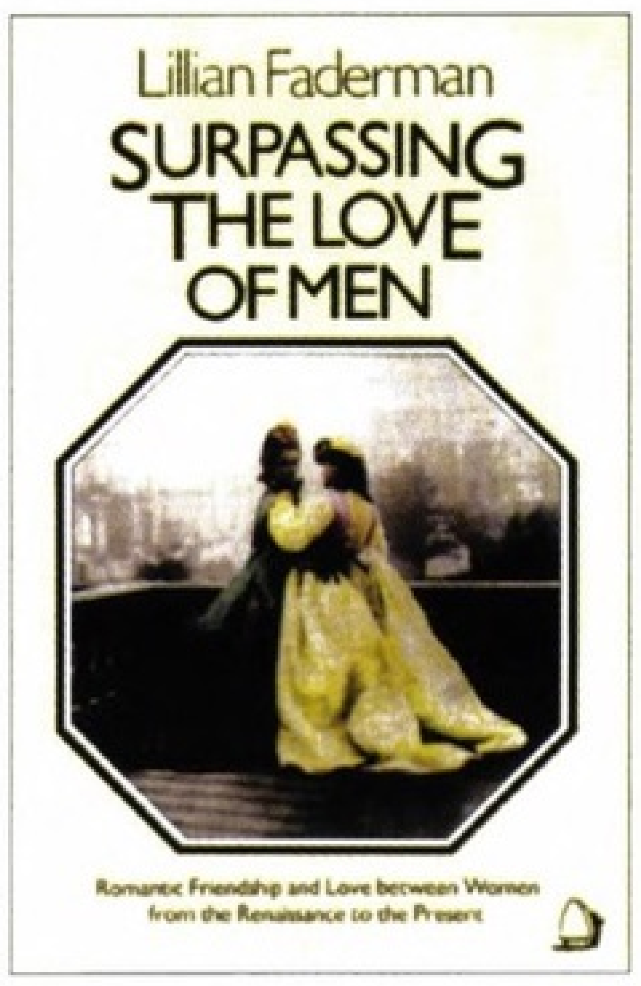
THE **CLASSIC**

Surpassing the love of men

... being the book that traces the chequered history of love between women

I WAS brought up to believe that lesbians were unfortunate creatures, to be pitied rather than reviled. They couldn't help being the way they were; their behaviour was due to having too many male hormones. This made it very difficult for me to come to terms with my own feelings towards other women. Only when I became able to substitute a political awareness for the idea of hormonal imbalance was I able to relax into my identity. But I still carried with me the anger and confusion of those early lessons about lesbian aberration. Where had such absurd ideas come from?

Lillian Faderman's **Surpassing the love of men** answered many of my questions. In it she traces a history of romantic friendship and love between women from the Renaissance to the early 1980s – and discovers that relationships between women were accepted, even encouraged, for centuries.


Lillian Faderman
SURPASSING THE LOVE OF MEN
Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present

Faderman was surprised by her findings. Her research began as a study of Emily Dickinson's love letters and poems to Sue Gilbert – documents which were full of passionate pronouncements of love. But there were no traces of guilt or fear of discovery. When she went on to look at correspondence between their women contemporaries, she discovered that almost all of these in nineteenth-century America, Britain, France and Germany had made a passionate commitment to another woman at some time in her life.

Before the early twentieth century, the idea of the lesbian as a particular kind of woman did not exist. There were lesbian sexual acts, which it was assumed decent women would never perform, but no clear-cut identity. Nevertheless, Faderman's research shows that many women's most important relationships were with other women, and that many couples dreamed of being able to escape to the country to set up home and live together forever.

It seems that at times when sex-roles were very clearly delineated, and when marriage was more a matter of economics than love, men felt secure enough to indulge women's relationships with one another. However, if a woman tried to usurp male privileges, that was a different matter. Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, numbers of women were executed for wearing male clothing and attempting to pass as men. And although some of these women married other women, the real crime appeared to be the usurping of male privilege, not lesbian sexual activity.

It is hard to know whether the relationships which women wrote about so extensively included genital sex. In previous centuries, decent women have been considered asexual, and probably also saw themselves as such. Love was seen as the highest manifestation of spiritual union, while sex was a base animal passion.

Faderman argues that for most modern lesbians, genital sex is not central to their self-definition. Although, in these sexually self-conscious times, sex is a factor to be considered, what is more important is that lesbians give their love, energy and support to other women, that they are 'woman-centred'. To this extent, modern lesbian-feminists are not very different to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century romantic friends.

As women began to gain economic independence their relationships with each other began to seem threatening to the social order. For the first time the possibility of setting up long-term households together became a reality. In their struggle for rights to education, employment and the vote, it must have seemed natural for women to turn to one another for support, rather than to marry a man who would expect his wife to subordinate her interests to his.

Sexology as a scientific discipline arose at about the same time as feminism. Passionate love between women was explicitly linked to specific sexual practices which were defined as abnormal. The lesbian was created and pathologized at a single stroke. Feminists were accused of being lesbians, and 'normal' women were warned against them.

For several decades, it was almost impossible for lesbians to find positive images of their lives. Expressions of love between women, which had been seen as entirely innocent and laudable in previous eras, were suddenly suspect. Women were taught that close friendships were to be viewed with suspicion.

Only with the sexual revolution of the late 1960s and early 1970s were lesbians able to reclaim the sexological label, and make it their own. Now the term 'lesbian' allows an identity which once again encompasses far more than just a narrow focus on sexual acts.

Since this book came out in 1981, lesbian-feminism has lost some of its support. In the 1990s, the focus has shifted once again towards sexual activity and away from political solidarity. **Surpassing the love of men** can offer a reminder to modern lesbians – and to heterosexual women – that there is a spectrum of experience which offers a source of strength to all women. Every woman can engage in passionate friendship, and to some extent – in the words of the old 1970s slogan – every woman can be a lesbian. ■

Elizabeth Sourbut

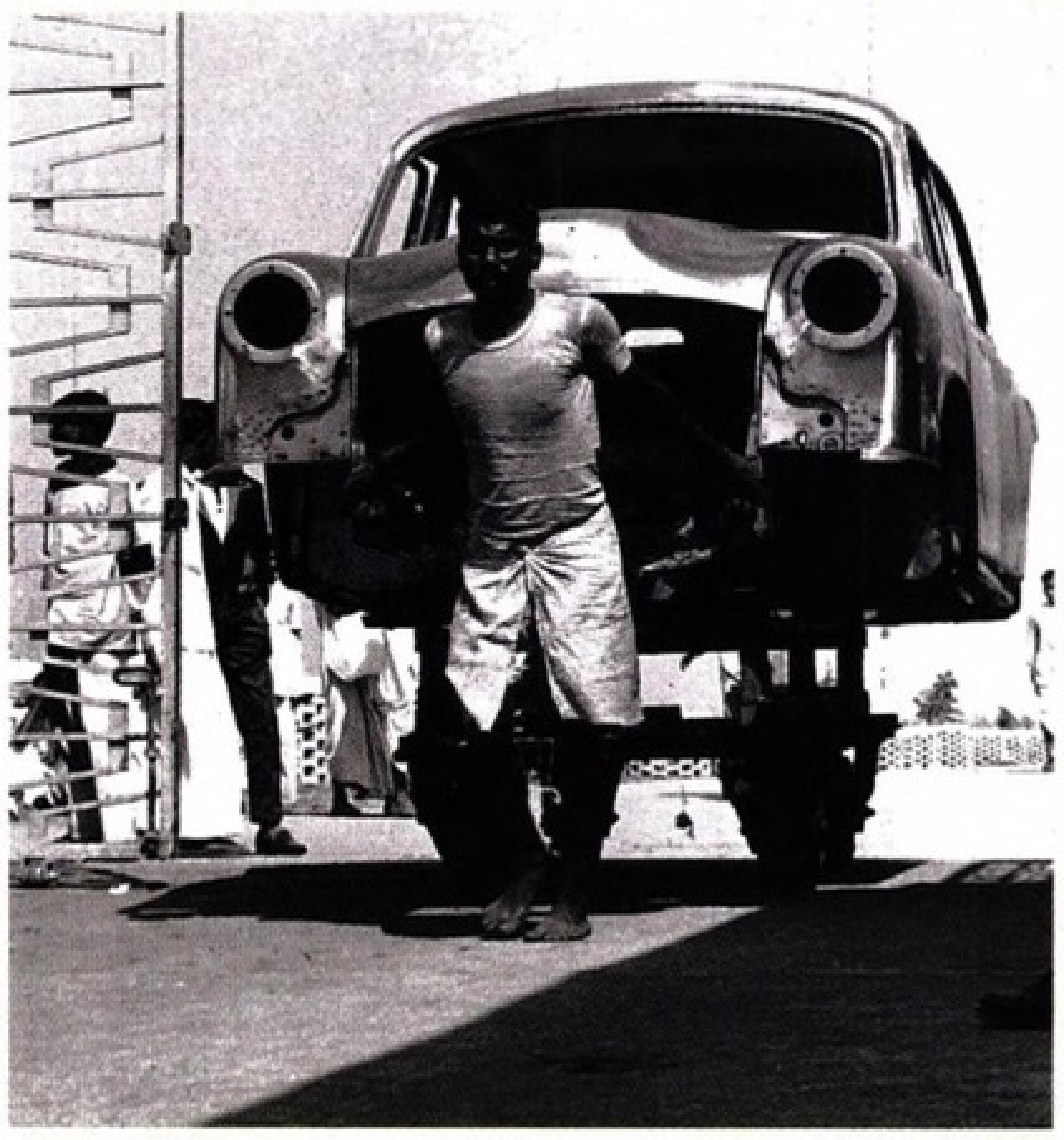
__Surpassing the love of men__ by __Lillian Faderman__ was published by William Morrow and Company Inc, 1981, in the US and The Women's Press, 1985 (reprinted 1991) in the UK.

Curiosities

QUESTIONS THAT HAVE ALWAYS INTRIGUED YOU ABOUT THE WORLD WILL APPEAR IN THIS, YOUR SECTION, AND BE ANSWERED BY OTHER READERS. PLEASE ADDRESS YOUR ANSWERS AND QUESTIONS TO 'CURIOSITIES'.

How much energy is needed to manufacture an average-sized car?

● One estimate gives the energy required to manufacture a car to be 65,000 mega-joules – the equivalent to the energy obtainable from 1.5 tonnes of crude oil. This estimate includes the energy used in manufacturing the raw materials for the car, as well as that used in the assembly process.


CLAUDE SAUVAGEOT

Cars consume vast amounts of energy – in every way.

However, manufacturing processes represent only a fraction of the energy consumed by a car in its lifetime. If a car travels 12,500 miles in one year, it will use over 285 gallons of fuel – equivalent to a tonne of crude oil.

Figures for the UK in 1988 show that road transport consumed the energy equivalent to 210 million tonnes of oil. That's 42 per cent of the country's total energy consumption for one year.

This information comes from: *The Energy Question,* by Gerald Foley, Penguin Books 1992 and *Road Vehicle Fuel Economy,* TRRl/HMSO, 1992.

T Connolley
Preston, England

A US estimate of the actual energy required to manufacture 10 million cars a year was the equivalent of 575,000 barrels of oil a day.

But the manufacture of cars also involves some of the most energy consuming and polluting processes. Iron and steel production involves sulphur dioxide air emissions leading to acid rain and toxic slag waste; aluminium production involves land degradation in bauxite mining, emits sulphur dioxide and uses huge amounts of subsidized electrical energy.

Platinum, zinc, lead and copper production are all toxic – the last involving huge open-pit mines and sulphur dioxide emissions. Pollutants such as sulphuric acid, heavy metals, mercury, CFCs and other ozone-depleting and greenhouse gases, are also produced massively. Car production also uses up 10 per cent of all plastics produced in most industrialized countries.

Finally, two million metric tonnes of material from cars end up on US rubbish dumps a year.

These facts are taken from *The Environmental Impact of the Car,* a Greenpeace Report 1992. Also interesting are two Worldwatch papers entitled: *The Bicycle: vehicle for a small planet (Number 90)* and *Alternatives to the Automobile: transport for limited cities (Number 98).*

Christian Huot
Montreal, Canada

AWAITING YOUR ANSWERS

What is happening in Iraq? What happened to the Kurds and to the Arabs who were hiding in the marshes? Why don't we ever hear anything? Are sanctions still in force?

Pamela Beard
Ilford, England

How would the introduction of a single European currency affect the countries of the South?

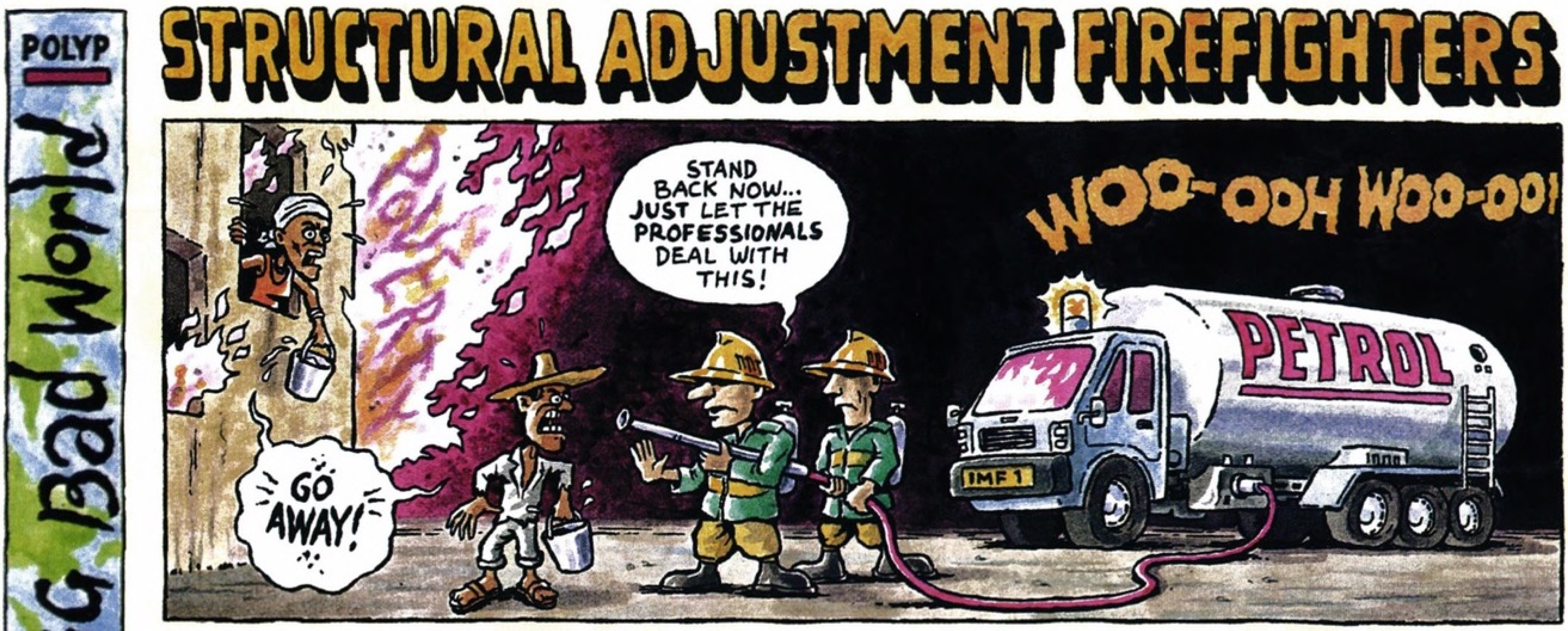
Isabel Milner
London, England

When I donate my blood to the National Blood Transfusion Service am I doing myself any good – apart from the good feeling I get from the belief that I am helping other people? Has there been any modern research into whether opening a vein occasionally really is good for the constitution?

Trefor Puw
Newport, Wales

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR ANSWERS PLEASE SEND THEM TO **CURIOSITIES, NEW INTERNATIONALIST, 55 RECTORY ROAD, OXFORD OX4 IBW, UK,** OR TO YOUR LOCAL NI OFFICE (SEE INSIDE FRONT COVER FOR ADDRESSES).

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS SECTION ARE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF **NI**.


POLYP
big Bad World
STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT FIREFIGHTERS
POVERTY
STAND BACK NOW... JUST LET THE PROFESSIONALS DEAL WITH THIS!
WOO-OOH WOO-OO!
PETROL
IMF 1
GO AWAY!
TO THE RESCUE!!

ENDPIECE

Mr Egg-on-the-Face

Why **Steve Eckardt** decided not to report on a story he was told in Havana by Cubans who hadn't even been kidnapped by aliens.

My last night in Havana I heard a story I couldn't believe.

I was in the hotel bar, of course. My informant – a well-educated Afro-Cuban artist – told me that a plane from the United States had flown over the capital dropping anti-government leaflets just the weekend before.

'Yeah, right,' I said. 'As if any country would let hostile aircraft fly over its capital unmolested. Especially Cuba – it's only had 37 years of US-sponsored invasions, assassination plots, germ warfare, bombings, blockades...'

'*Es verdad* – it's true,' she assured me. 'And they did it last summer too.'

Now I was supposed to believe it happened twice! I said I was a journalist specializing in Cuba and Mexico, and I'd heard nothing about it.

She shrugged. 'You don't believe me? Ask someone else. They'll tell you the same thing.'

So I did. And they did.

Well, this was one unbelievable story I wasn't going to humiliate myself by trying to report. Hell, there's people who'll tell you they've been kidnapped by aliens.

One thing did give me pause as I took my leave. 'You know,' she said with a touch of petulance, 'the Government *did* tell them that if they ever did it again the Air Force would shoot them down.'

That part's credible, I thought. But... *nah.*

Now it's common knowledge that the woman's story was true: Cuba *did* allow hostile aircraft to fly over Havana both in July and January, and it *did* issue repeated warnings of what would happen the next time.

Now we are all expected to believe a far more incredible tale, in fact one that appears demonstrably false: murderous Cubans shot down 'clearly unarmed' civilian planes.

Leave aside one wag's remark: the only people who are 'clearly unarmed' are naked – and even then, not if they're carrying a lunch box.

Leave aside Cuba's forced existence in a virtual state of war with Washington for so long – the innumerable CIA operations, the US embargo that's not supported by any other country in the world.

The truth is that 'Brothers to the Rescue', the organization responsible for penetrations of Cuban airspace, is about as humanitarian as Pat Buchanan, its aircraft about as civilian as General Schwarzkopf in his retirement business suit. 'Brothers' is a group of Cuban exiles devoted to the overthrow of Cuba's Government. Its leader, José Basulto, is distinguished by having participated in the Bay of Pigs invasion and subsequently firing a cannon at an hotel in Havana.

The real activities of the 'Brothers' were exposed at a press conference in Cuba that was hardly reported at all by the mainstream press. Juan Roque is a major in the Cuban Air Force who defected to the US, joined the 'Brothers' and became the darling of the Cuban exile community in Florida. He told a national television audience that he'd returned to Cuba to denounce the terrorist plans of the 'Brothers'. He went on to detail CIA involvement in the organization, their regular illegal landings on Cuban soil and their plans to introduce weapons and terror squads to the island.

So it is Washington that should answer for the actions of the 'Brothers' and the lives of the downed pilots. After all, it was the US Government that condoned – apparently even aided – the exiles' violations of both US and international law.

Contrast with this the US Government's treatment of Harlem-based Rev Lucius Walker. His attempt to send medical aid to Cuban hospitals through Cuban churches was met by US police and Customs agents in full riot gear as he and 300 supporters attempted to cross the border into Mexico. Rev Walker subsequently went on a protest hunger strike.

Immediately after the downing of the aircraft the US Government moved swiftly to restrict Cuban spokespeople from traveling to the States to speak to Americans, and terminated flights for those wishing to travel to Cuba. Both these actions were clear efforts to prevent the US public from getting the other side of the story.

Such efforts are of a piece with the hue and cry in the US against anyone – including the far-from-communist Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan – who dares to express unorthodox opinions or listen to others, outside the borders of the US. Cuba is eminently guilty of thinking internationally, as Nelson Mandela's recent tribute to Cuban support for the anti-apartheid struggle has underlined.

Taken together with Malcolm X's injunction to 'look upon the struggle on the world stage', doesn't this speak volumes about what should be done by alliances across international borders? A good place to start – beginning with yours truly, Mr Egg-on-the-Face – is believing what folks 'overseas' have to tell us.

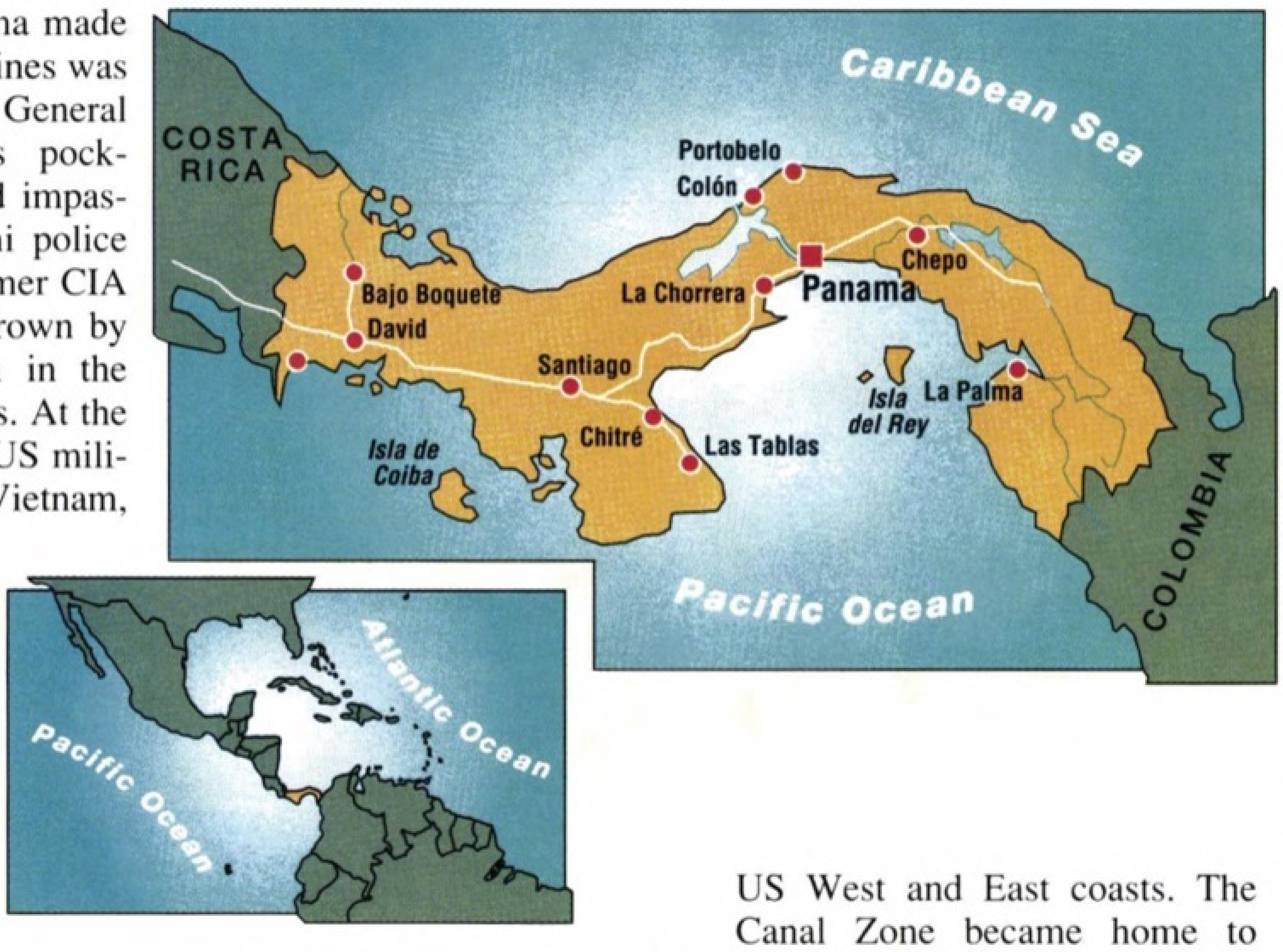
Steve Eckardt (e-mail: seckardt@aol.com) is a Chicago-based freelance journalist who covered the 'Solidarity with the Third World' international meeting held in Havana.

Hardly humanitarian: José Basulto (centre) talks to 'Brothers to the Rescue' pilots about the latest escapade.

ZORAN MILICH /GAMMA/FRANK SPOONER

Country profile

Panama



THE last time Panama made international headlines was in 1990, when General Manuel Noriega's pockmarked face stared impassively out from a Miami police mugshot. Noriega, a former CIA 'asset', had been overthrown by a massive US invasion in the closing days of the 1980s. At the time, it was the biggest US military action since Vietnam, resulting in a chaos of looting and overkill which left much of the capital, Panama City, destroyed, and between 500 and 2,000 civilians dead. Noriega was subsequently sentenced to 40 years in a Florida jail on eight counts of drug trafficking.

After the invasion, the US installed a more co-operative president, Guillermo Endara, but little else changed. Drug trafficking and money laundering, the avowed reason for the invasion, both increased; Endara's shaky coalition fell apart, and in 1994 Ernesto Pérez Balladares, the candidate of Noriega's PRD party, won presidential elections. Under US and IMF pressure, both Endara and Pérez Balladares carried out a free-market shock programme of public spending cuts and privatizations.

Washington has treated Panama as its protectorate since US gunboats helped the country secede from Colombia in 1903. In return, Washington was given sovereignty over a strip of territory running through the heart of Panama 'in perpetuity'. The US promptly fulfilled a centuries-old dream, building a canal across the narrowest point of the Americas, massively reducing the costs of trade between the US West and East coasts. The Canal Zone became home to the US military's 'Southern Command', the launch pad for its domination of much of Latin America throughout this century.

US interference in Panamanian politics provoked a strong nationalist movement and a schism between it and those who have benefited from US largesse. The US bases currently pump $250 million a year into the Panamanian economy, and jobs on the bases pay four or five times more than equivalent jobs elsewhere. Nationalism reached its height under General Omar Torrijos, immortalized in Graham Greene's *Getting to Know the General*, leading in 1977 to a renegotiated Canal treaty signed by Torrijos and Jimmy Carter, under which the US promised to hand the Canal back and leave its Panamanian bases by the end of the century.

Most of the people, jobs and wealth are concentrated in a thin strip either side of the Canal, including Panama City, which has become an international banking centre, and the giant Colón Free Zone, the largest in the world after Hong Kong. Here over 800 international companies warehouse and distribute goods across the Americas from behind a high barbed-wire fence separating their enclave from the shacks of Colón city.

Beyond the Canal strip, Panama is a thinly populated, heavily forested tropical cornucopia of plants and wildlife, facing the familiar threats of peasant colonization and deforestation. With one special twist – the resulting soil erosion is threatening to silt up the Canal just as ownership is finally handed over to Panama in the year 2000. ■

Duncan Green

AT A GLANCE

GUISEPPE BIZZARRI / PANOS

Leader President Ernesto Pérez Balladares

Economy GNP per capita $2,600 (UK $18,060)

Monetary Unit: Effectively the US dollar, since the Panamanian Balboa has been tied at parity to the dollar since 1904

Main exports: Bananas, seafood, sugar, beef and coffee

Main imports: Manufactured goods, fuel.

Panama's economy is distorted by the Canal Zone, making trade secondary to the income generated by services, such as canal tolls, banking income, and revenue from the Colón free zone. Service income enables it to run a large trade deficit.

People 2.6 million. Annual population growth rate 1980-94 2.0%.

Health Infant mortality 18 per 1,000 live births (Canada 6 per 1,000). Health conditions are generally better than elsewhere in Central America, a legacy of greater government spending. This is now under threat, especially in rural areas, from government cuts as part of structural-adjustment policies.

Culture Panama's role as an international crossroads has produced a multi-ethnic society in which 13% of the population are black, many the descendants of immigrant Caribbean workers who died in thousands building the Canal. A further 10% of Panamanians are indigenous, while the remainder are mestizo, or mixed blood.

Religion: 86% identify themselves as Roman Catholic, though less than one in five regularly attend mass; 8% are Protestant.

Languages: Spanish, and the five Indian groups also speak indigenous languages.

Sources *Inside Panama, UNDP Human Development Report, UNICEF State of the World's Children 1996.*

Previously profiled December 1981.

NI star rating

EXCELLENT	★★★★★
GOOD	★★★★
FAIR	★★★
POOR	★★
APPALLING	★

STAR RATINGS

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★

The most unequal country in the Americas apart from the world leader in the field, Brazil.

1981 ★

SELF-RELIANCE ★★

Panama is highly dependent on its role as international trade and finance centre. This plugs a large trade gap.

1981 ★★

POSITION OF WOMEN ★★★

A long history of feminist organizing has produced political gains for women, though machismo remains deeply embedded.

1981 ★★★

LITERACY ★★★★

90%: high due to education reforms in the 1960s and 1970s and higher per-capita income.

1981 ★★★★

FREEDOM ★★

The human-rights situation is generally better than in neighbouring countries such as Colombia and Nicaragua.

1981 ★★★★

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★★

73 years. Compares favourably with other Latin American countries (Aotearoa/NZ 75 years).

1981 ★★★★

POLITICS

NI ASSESSMENT ★★

Panama's history is dominated by regular US intervention, which has undermined stability and led to several military coups. But the 1994 elections were reasonably fair, and allowed a peaceful transition to an elected president. Power is generally in the hands of the white élite, backed by the US and by financial interests.

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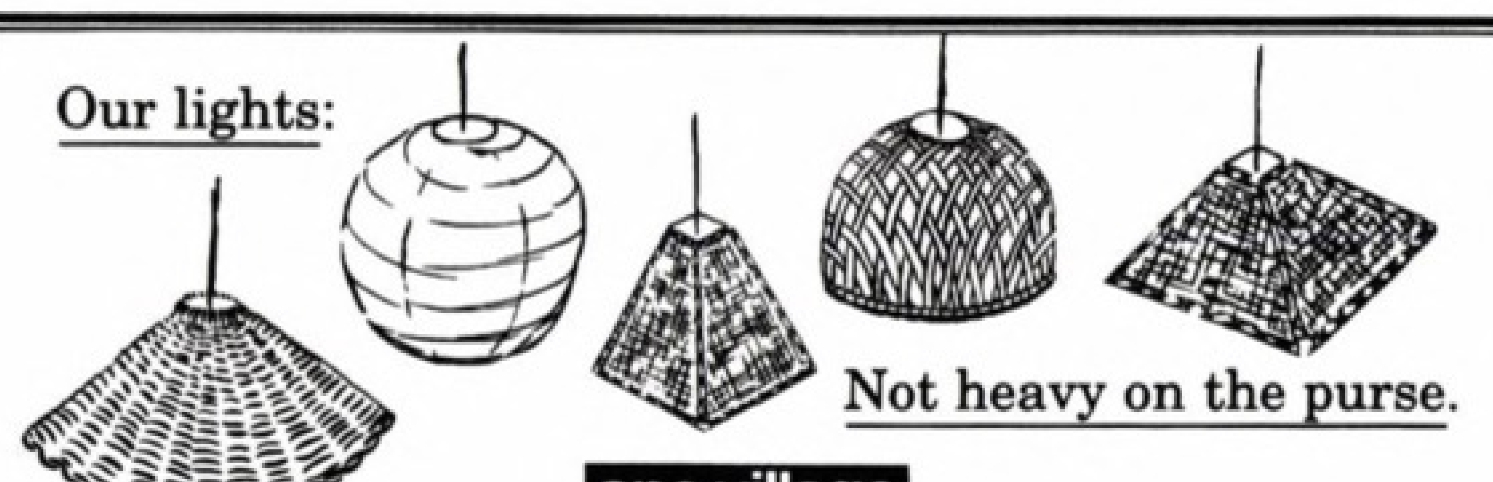

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